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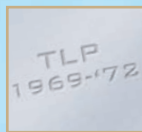
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AIRBORNE INVASION

Parachutes descend over the Merderet River meadow during a D-Day anniversary re-enactment attended by National Commander Clarence Hill in Normandy, France, on June 6. See a gallery of photos from his official visit to Europe at www.clarencehill.legion.org.

Damien Fantauzzo

The American Legion Magazine, a leader among national general-interest publications, is published monthly by The American Legion for its 2.5 million members. These wartime veterans, working through 14,000 community-level posts, dedicate themselves to God and Country and traditional American values; strong national security; adequate and compassionate care for veterans, their widows and orphans; community service; and the wholesome development of our nation's youth.



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ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/ OPERATIONS Brandy Ballenger
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PHOTO EDITOR James V. Carroll
PRODUCTION MANAGER Tony Heath
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CONTACT The American Legion Magazine
P.O. Box 7068
Indianapolis, IN 46207
ADVERTISING SALES James G. Elliott
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'Blue Water Battle'

Ken Olsen's article (July) was an eye-opener. It is hard to believe that many veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange while serving in Vietnam – over, on, and in close proximity to land – are denied benefits. Defoliants do not have specific boundaries. That is like saying that CO2 emissions from power plants stay over just the power plants.

If VA has recognized that certain diseases are connected to Agent Orange, then all veterans should be treated equally, boots on ground or not. The statistics of veterans on the ground, and in the water or sky, need to be compared, and if the incidence of recognized diseases between these two groups is comparable, then justice needs to be served.

– Paul Fortin, Topeka, Kan.

I served with the Army in Vietnam and was exposed to Agent Orange on a daily basis. VA should grant the Blue Water veterans, and anyone who served in and around Vietnam, Agent Orange benefits.

Vietnam War veterans are dying at an astounding rate from various cancers and other Agent Orange-related illnesses. This past year, three of my closest friends passed away from cancers related to their time in the service. Many of my buddies are being treated for other related diseases.

We feel that many of us who served will not live to be 70. We were poisoned by Agent Orange. To deny benefits is a slap in the face to these Navy veterans.

– Paul Yeckel, Greensburg, Pa.

So, according to this article, if we were not subjected to Agent Orange, we would never get prostate cancer, diabetes or any other major illness. Millions of us suffer from those diseases and were never subjected to Agent Orange. What I hear from friends who never served – I did, for two years – is that too many veterans want to blame

every illness on their service in Vietnam. Type 2 diabetes, for example, is mainly a lifestyle disease – obesity, wrong diet, little exercise, etc. Help the legitimate cases, but remember that all people, veterans or not, suffer from these diseases.

– Paul Dici, Ellwood City, Pa.

Agent Orange did blow out to sea over our sailors in the South China Sea. In 1967, I was the meteorological officer on USS *Tripoli* (LHP 10). We cruised up and down the Vietnam coast supporting the Marines, often near the DMZ and a river that empties into the sea. Upriver is a valley that extends westward. During the summer months, the wind often came from the west. Moving through the valley gave it a Venturi effect, increasing its speed by two to three times. By the time the wind reached the sea, it was gale force. The wind spread out over a few miles to the north and south, then decreased. But it blew over many ships, and if it contained Agent Orange, it may well have affected my shipmates. I believe it did.

– Elmer A. Erdei, Sparks, Nev.



I recently retired from a long career with VA, where I worked as a decision-review officer for the past four years.

Granted, VA is not perfect, but articles such as this portray VA unfairly, in my opinion. For service connection to be granted for the so-called Blue Water veterans, VA is required to follow the dictates of Congress, the Board of Veterans Appeals, and the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. Regional offices cannot grant benefits unless veterans supply the evidence needed by law.

Unless Congress decides to change the current laws and regulations, regional offices must continue the process, even if it's considered unfair.

— Rich Bensinger, Berwyn, Ill.

I served in the Air Force in Southeast Asia, Taiwan and Thailand in full support of the Vietnam conflict. I had over 300 hours of flying, refueling fighter aircraft. Those of us in the air saw and flew through the clouds of Agent Orange, and breathed in that toxic defoliant while in flight. This was like secondhand smoke – whether in the air or on the ground, one couldn't prevent coming into contact with it.

The same applies to those of us working on the aircraft preparing for the next refueling mission. Agent Orange was absorbed into the aircraft structure, both the metal and the soft parts. It remained no matter what maintenance actions were taken, and the maintenance crew carried Agent Orange in clothing and bedding.

The United States had, and I believe still has, some aircraft that cannot be sold to other countries, cut up, burned or buried. They have had to be fenced in, with no possible access. The aircraft are saturated with the toxic defoliant.

— Robie S. Farmer, Fairborn, Ohio

Veterans preference

National Commander Clarence Hill wrote brilliantly about the GI Bill of Rights and its sterling success in providing assistance to returning World War II veterans to enter college, buy homes and receive job training (Commander's Message, July).

Today's veterans are often told by "expert" career coaches to leave their military service out of their résumés to get interviews, and people tell them it was because of their military service when they don't. Yet I am dismayed that the best these goal-oriented, team-oriented veterans with solid work ethics can expect are promises ("President Obama has established task forces," "VA Secretary Eric Shinseki has made economic recovery ... among his highest priorities"). Where's the beef?

— Vincent Rios, Haslet, Texas

One difficulty for veterans trying to get federal jobs is that most go to current federal employees first. In my opinion, all veterans should be considered government employees when applying for federal positions. Unemployed veterans should receive credit for their service to our country as current federal employees. It is discriminatory

to say that one person (the veteran) who was, or is, paid by the government has less value than another person (the current employee or employee with re-employment rights). This is not a preference but equality, similar to the re-employment right in the GI Bill.

— David W. Clements, Georgetown, Ky.

I have been unemployed for over 16 months, and have applied for IT positions at VA many times. I have been 95- to 100-percent technically qualified for almost all the positions for which I've applied. I claimed my 5-point veterans preference, and may qualify for the 10-point preference, as I was "boots on ground" in Saigon. I applied for 12 positions in a 12-month period, and was rejected for reasons that didn't make sense. I've given up trying to work for VA, where I believe I could be of great service with my 30-year IT career, military knowledge and medical experience.

— Joseph G. Galloway, San Antonio

'Citizenship 101'

I enjoyed Andy Romey's article (July) and am glad to see the Legion is doing something to educate at-risk youth about the unique virtues of U.S. history and government. As you know, the biggest problem we have in this country – the reason we're so close to losing our freedoms – is that the American people are simply not taught about these virtues. How can they appreciate something they don't even know they have?

— F.R. Duplantier, Bridgeton, Mo.

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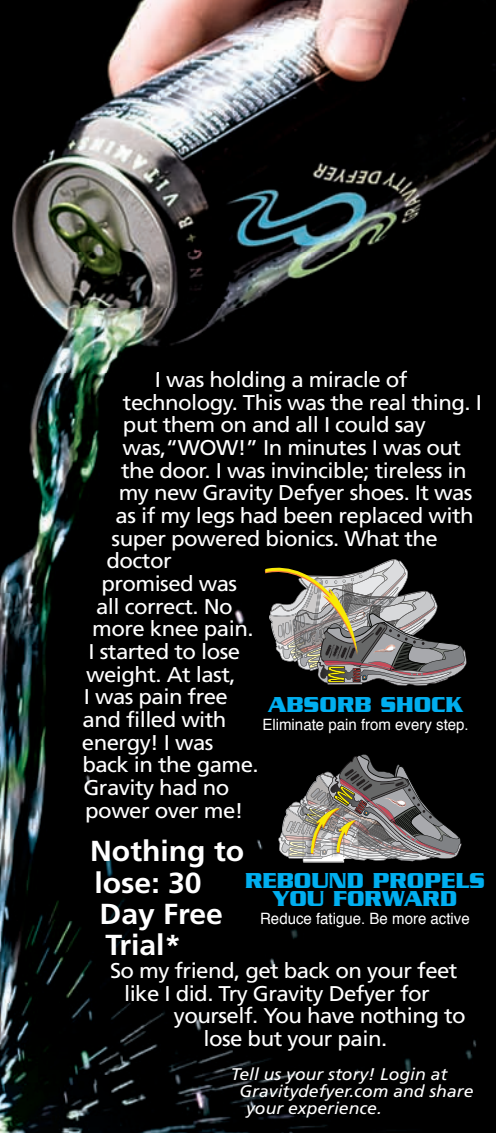
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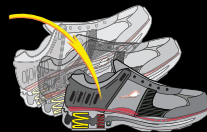
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The message behind the new media

Last October, when U.S. soldiers from Bravo Troop 361 Cavalry were ambushed and forced to call an air strike on their own position in a remote corner of Afghanistan, they lost every personal possession they owned. Eight of them lost their lives. One disheartened sergeant sent an e-mail that soon appeared on The American Legion's blog site, The Burn Pit: "Most people back home don't even know ... no one gives a s**t."

Legionnaires rushed to prove otherwise. They uploaded photos to the Internet of members holding up signs proclaiming, "We give a s**t." More than \$150,000 in merchandise, gift cards and laptop computers were soon on their way to the displaced troops.

This February, Operation Comfort Warriors – the Legion's marquee program to provide comfort items for troops recovering at DoD hospitals – took first place among 729 competitors in the Pepsi Refresh Everything grant competition. Legion members and friends voted online throughout the month and, by winning, secured a \$250,000 grant – money that is being used now to improve the lives of our wounded and their families.

These are just two examples among hundreds of why, throughout my year as national commander, I have emphasized the importance of dynamic electronic communication. This year, The American Legion vaulted into a new dimension of high-speed, multichanneled message transmission. Twitter and Facebook became part of our daily routine. The main Legion Web site tripled in visitation. *The American Legion Online Update* e-newsletter more than doubled in subscribers. Many Legion activities, from the Baseball World Series to the national convention, are now broadcast live on the Web. MyLegion.org, a social network that connects members, posts, departments and National Headquarters like never before, is the latest development. As I write this message, an American Legion mobile-phone app is being rolled out.

Changes are happening fast in the way we express The American Legion story and share it with others. In recent months, we have posted video interviews with World War II submariners, covered the Mojave Desert Cross ruling in the Supreme Court and followed the Freedom Car's races. We have promoted veteran job fairs, raised funds, covered Capitol Hill, and posted hundreds of original photos and videos. Between 75 and 100 fresh Legion stories have been posted each month. We have shown Web visitors how – and, more importantly, why – they should be a part of it all. Each of my official department visits is reported, with photos, on my blog site. The Legiontown USA site, meanwhile, has enabled local posts everywhere to share their outstanding stories online. Many more Web-based innovations are scheduled to appear soon.

The message, however, is not the medium. The message is us – what we do, who we are, the values we share. A group of soldiers from Fort Carson, Colo., received that message last fall. Wounded warriors from Walter Reed to Fort Lewis received that message after we received the Pepsi grant. Some 350,000 Web users a month are receiving it daily. Now, as communications technology continues to evolve, it is up to us, from National Headquarters to the smallest post, to always have a message to send. You never know when some war-weary soldier half a world away is sitting at a computer looking for someone who cares.

Clarence E. Hill



National Commander
Clarence E. Hill

MEMORANDA

AMERICAN LEGION DAY:

American Legion posts and departments everywhere are urged to celebrate American Legion Day on Sept. 16. In 2009, both houses of Congress passed proclamations recognizing the date in 1919 when the Legion received its federal charter. The day offers Legionnaires an opportunity to invite the public, elected officials and the media to local posts and department headquarters to see firsthand the services provided by the Legion every day. Get online for more information about American Legion Day, or to share a story and photos about a local Legion event.

www.legion.org/legiontown

COMMANDER'S TESTIMONY:

On Sept. 22, The American Legion's national commander will testify before a joint session of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs committees, sharing the organization's legislative priorities and budget recommendations for the next fiscal year. See coverage at the Legion's Web site.

www.legion.org

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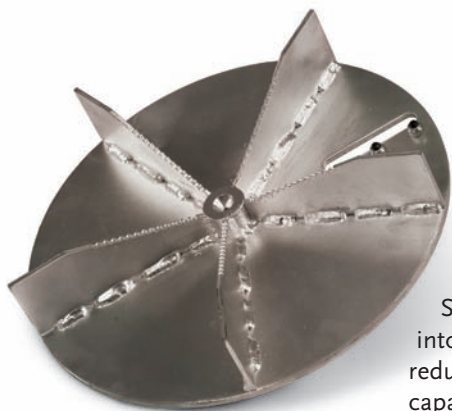
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■ McConnell is the Senate Republican Leader.

In 2007, 11 retired admirals and generals warned that climate change “can act as a threat multiplier for instability in some of the most volatile regions of the world, and it presents significant national-security challenges for the United States.”

Pentagon, CIA and Bush administration security analysts have affirmed that climate change is poised to inject a major new source of chaos into an already unstable world.

Scientists say the Himalayan glaciers, which supply fresh water to a billion people in India and Pakistan, face severe effects from climate change. If rivers dry up and famine spreads in this strategically vital region, it’s not hard to see how climate change could have a directly destabilizing effect on national security.

Maintaining the global infrastructure that delivers foreign oil to our shores costs us between \$50 billion and \$132 billion each year. This doesn’t take into account the potentially devastating costs of sending over \$500 billion a year to often-unfriendly nations. And every time oil prices go up \$1, another \$1.5 billion goes to Iran, propping up a regime that despises America and exports terror.

Anthony Zinni, a former CENTCOM commander and no radical tree-hugger, put it simply: “We will pay to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions today, and we’ll have to take an economic hit of some kind. Or we will pay the price later in military terms. And that will involve human lives.”

Sen. Lieberman, I-Conn., and I have unveiled a comprehensive energy and climate bill to address climate change and help end our dangerous addiction to foreign oil. And we’ll do it in a way that will create jobs and protect consumers. An EPA analysis even shows that it will reduce energy bills. This should be an easy vote on a threat that is as tough as they come.

The tragic oil spill in the Gulf has most Americans looking for government and the private sector to join forces and stop the leak. For Democrats in Washington, however, this terrible crisis is a prime opportunity to push a new national energy tax that

would vastly expand the role of government and the cost of living, and kill U.S. jobs.

Specifically, Democrats are working with the Obama administration to push the so-called Kerry-Lieberman

bill – also known as cap and trade – that would impose permanent new federal costs on utilities, manufacturers and refiners. Supporters say the bill is aimed at big corporations, but in reality every family and business will be hit with higher energy costs. At a time when high taxes are already making it difficult for people to dig themselves out of the recession, Washington wants to tax us every time we turn on a light switch or fill up our cars.

Much like the recent – and much-despised – health-care bill, the Kerry-Lieberman bill is being sold as a response to a crisis that it would do nothing to solve. Republicans have sensible ideas for limiting U.S. dependence on fossil fuels and building a cleaner energy future – without expanding government or imposing punishing new costs. Clean nuclear energy, electrifying more of our cars and trucks, stronger oversight and accountability standards for polluters like BP, and a new focus on conservation would reduce U.S. dependence on oil and help lead us to a cleaner and greener future.

The Obama administration should stop using the oil spill as an excuse to push even bigger government. To paraphrase Jay Leno, they should use the oil spill as an excuse to stop the oil spill. Then they should join Republicans in embracing sensible ideas for a clean-energy future that don’t raise taxes and kill jobs.

THE HEART OF THE ISSUE

Supporters say comprehensive energy legislation is needed to address the threats of climate change. Critics say the proposed bill will raise taxes and kill jobs.

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New treatment for diabetic eyes

An estimated 2.5 million seniors with diabetes have diabetic eye disease. Caused by damaged blood vessels in the eye, diabetic retinopathy and macular edema result in significant vision loss. For the past 25 years, the standard treatment has involved laser surgery to stop blood vessels in the retina from leaking. But a recent study, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, evaluated a new treatment that involves injecting a drug directly into the retina. In the study, performed in 52 clinics across the country, one group of patients received laser surgery, and another received laser surgery plus injections of the drug ranibizumab (Lucentis®, Novartis Pharmaceuticals). After one year, 50 percent of those who received the injections experienced substantial vision improvement, compared to only 28 percent of those who received laser surgery alone.

Living Well is designed to provide general information. It is not intended to be, nor is it, medical advice. Readers should consult their physicians when they have health problems.

Can the right foods tame inflammation?

BY JUDITH HURLEY

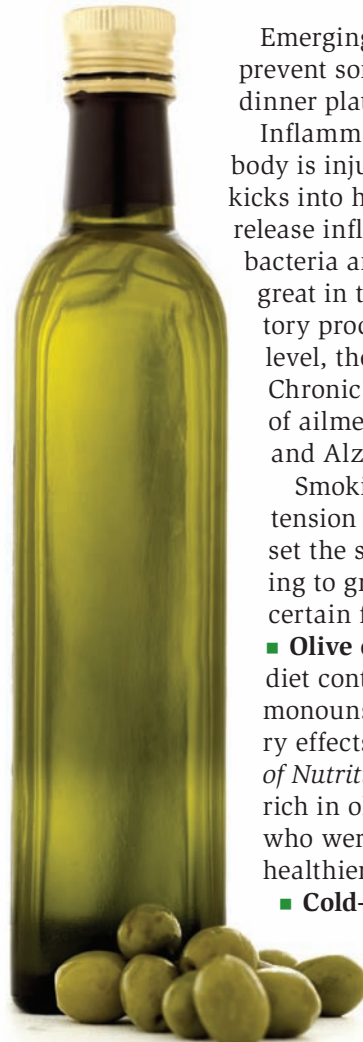
Emerging science suggests the medicine to prevent some diseases may be as close as your dinner plate.

Inflammation can be a good thing. When the body is injured or infected, the immune system kicks into high gear. This triggers tissues to release inflammatory compounds that fight off bacteria and viruses and heal injuries. That's great in the short term, but when the inflammatory process is continually fired up at a low level, the consequences are decidedly bad. Chronic inflammation plays a role in an array of ailments, including heart disease, diabetes and Alzheimer's disease.

Smoking, high blood sugar, obesity, hypertension and unhealthy cholesterol levels can set the stage for chronic inflammation. According to growing scientific evidence, however, certain foods can help tame the fiery beast:

■ **Olive oil.** This staple of the Mediterranean diet contains oleic acid, a building block of monounsaturated fat that has anti-inflammatory effects. The *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* reported that after eating a meal rich in olive oil, overweight men and women who were at risk for developing diabetes had healthier insulin and blood-sugar levels.

■ **Cold-water fish.** Salmon, mackerel, herring and other fatty fish contain omega-3 fats, which dampen inflammation. Inflammatory processes are partly responsible for atherosclerosis, the



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The gender gap on heart attacks

Women who have severe heart attacks are twice as likely to die as men, according to a study reported in the journal *Circulation*. That's in part because women are less likely to experience chest pain or pressure, and medical personnel don't recognize their symptoms quickly enough.

The study also revealed that women are less likely to receive aspirin or beta blockers in the emergency room, or undergo emergency procedures to restore blood flow to the heart.

Although women may not experience chest pain or discomfort, they are more likely than men to have other

heart-attack symptoms. The American Heart Association says women should be alert to these signs:

- Discomfort or pain in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back
- Discomfort or pain in the back, neck, jaw, arms or stomach
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea, lightheadedness, or breaking out in a cold sweat

Anyone with these symptoms shouldn't wait more than five minutes before calling 911.

buildup of fatty plaques in arteries. That's one reason the American Heart Association recommends eating at least two servings of fatty fish a week.

■ **Fiber.** It's good for more than regularity. In a 20-year study of British men, those who ate the least fiber (20 grams a day or less) were most likely to develop diabetes, while those who ate the most had the lowest levels of inflammation. Whole grains, beans, vegetables, fruit and bran are good sources.

■ **Cherries.** Like other deeply colored fruits, cherries sport a healthy array of antioxidant compounds. In a study led by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, levels of three inflammatory compounds in the blood dropped significantly in men and women who ate 10 ounces of cherries a day for a month.

■ **Turmeric.** This mild-flavored spice gives curry powder its golden color, and has been used for centuries in India to fight inflammatory diseases. Animal studies suggest the curcumin in turmeric may protect against the degenerative changes in the brain that lead to Alzheimer's disease.

Blueberries, garlic, green tea, pomegranate, ginger and dark-green leafy vegetables are other foods with anti-inflammatory benefits. Although the inflammation-disease connection is an area of emerging science, food may turn out to be the best spoonful of medicine you can take.

Judith Hurley is a freelance writer specializing in medicine and health.



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Pearing down

An apple a day may keep the doctor away, but it's better to look like a pear, says Dr. Mary Ann McLaughlin, a cardiologist with Mount Sinai Medical Center.

McLaughlin told Fox News that "the pear shape is the protective shape," while people with apple shapes – more weight around the midsection – are at risk.

"What we've found is that the fat tissue that lines the abdomen, the adipose fat, is high in the inflammatory markers that lead to heart and cholesterol problems," she explains. People with pear shapes – smaller waists but larger hips and thighs – have less stomach fat and are at less risk for these problems.

McLaughlin suggests a number of ways to counter these problems:

- Exercise, especially in ways that work the stomach.
- Cut down on carbs, which can increase fat around the abdomen.
- Eat more nuts, which can help reduce cholesterol.
- Add flaxseed powder, which cuts cholesterol, to cereal and other food.
- Drink grape juice, cranberry juice and even a glass of wine daily.

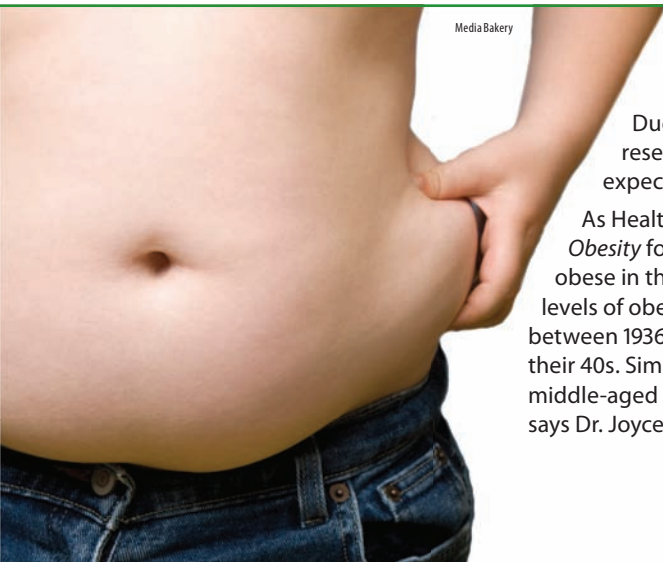


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Weight lists

Due to the fact that Americans are "getting heavier at an earlier age," researchers predict that chronic illness will increase – and that life expectancy will actually fall.

As HealthDay reports, a new study published in the *International Journal of Obesity* found that one in five of those born between 1966 and 1985 became obese in their 20s. Among those born between 1946 and 1955, however, similar levels of obesity didn't kick in until they were in their 30s. And for those born between 1936 and 1945, similar levels of obesity didn't appear until people entered their 40s. Simply put, "Our research indicates that higher numbers of young and middle-aged American adults are becoming obese at younger and younger ages," says Dr. Joyce Lee, the study's lead author.



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VA shifts to new primary-care model

BY DR. JOEL KUPERSMITH

If you rely on your local VA for primary care, you're likely to see some changes over the next year or two.

A major shift in VA is under way, toward a new model of primary care called the "patient-centered medical home." At least 80 percent of VA primary-care clinics will operate according to the new model by 2012. The rest will follow by 2015.

This transformation requires a major investment of resources. But experts predict it will pay off in both better health outcomes for veterans and eventual cost savings for the department. VA already outperforms the private sector on many measures, and the patient-centered medical home is expected to boost quality even further.

What is special about the medical home? The model emphasizes team-based care. A typical group has a physician, a nurse practitioner, a registered nurse, a medical assistant and an administrative aide. For routine visits, patients are typically seen by the nurse practitioner. More complex matters are attended to by the physician.

Additional support comes from a pharmacist, a social worker, a mental-health therapist and a nutritionist. The whole team works closely together, and arranges for services from other providers as necessary.

The goal is to offer comprehensive, coordinated and proactive care with an emphasis on



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preventing illness. Continuity of care – through long-term relationships between patients and providers – is also important.

Other features include expanded hours, greater use of e-mail and phone contact with patients to augment visits and increased accessibility, and the use of electronic health records to help track and optimize care.

Many of these features already exist in VA. The challenge is combining them into an integrated, cohesive whole.

VA researchers are helping to meet the challenge. Five groups of investigators, based in different areas of the country, are now studying the patient-centered medical home as it is being implemented in their respective regions. The effort will take three to five years, and should provide important answers to guide VA's ongoing implementation of this promising model of primary care.

Joel Kupersmith, M.D., is chief research and development officer for the Veterans Health Administration.

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Burden of proof eased for PTSD

BY TOM PHILPOTT

The path to gaining VA disability benefits got a lot faster and smoother this summer for veterans diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder by a VA mental-health expert.

If veterans have served in a war zone or other dangerous area, they no longer have to document a specific event or circumstance – what VA calls “the stressor” – that caused their PTSD. Eligibility for compensation will no longer depend on finding a description of an incident in a unit record, or on gathering statements from credible eyewitnesses.

“This is good news for American veterans ... especially for veterans who have had their military records damaged or destroyed, for women veterans whose records don’t specify that they’ve had combat experience, and for veterans who have experienced combat but have no record of it,” said Dr. Robert A. Petzel, VA under-secretary for health.

But The American Legion and other veterans service organizations have one significant beef about the new rule. Only VA mental-health experts, including psychiatrists and psychologists under VA contact, can diagnose PTSD if veterans want to qualify for a disability rating and compensation.

“That’s our biggest concern, probably one of the only concerns left,” said Tim Tetz, director of the Legion’s National Legislative Division. And this requirement is likely to impact most heavily on veterans living in rural areas “where perhaps there is not a VA facility nearby.”

Otherwise, Tetz said, the new rule “made leaps toward making things right in taking care of those who have been in a theater of conflict.”

Before the new regulation took effect July 12, VA adjudicators reviewing PTSD claims were required to “develop” evidence, through records and eyewitness accounts, to corroborate that applicants experienced a fearful event or circumstances involving the threat of death or serious injury.

The new regulation eliminates that time-consuming requirement as long as the claimed

stressful event is consistent with the places, types and circumstances of the applicant’s military service, and if a VA psychiatrist or psychologist confirms that the claimed stressor is adequate to support a PTSD diagnosis.

“I don’t think our troops on the battlefield should have to take notes to keep for a claims application,” President Obama said in his Saturday radio

address days before the regulation took effect. “And I’ve met enough veterans to know that you don’t have to engage in a firefight to endure the trauma of war.”

VA officials said PTSD claims from veterans of all wars will be treated the same. Though VA recognizes that in Iraq and Afghanistan improvised explosive devices are a constant threat, Vietnam veterans “faced similarly common and unpredictable enemy rocket and mortar attacks, as well as ground assaults from organized enemy forces.”

The relaxed evidentiary rule is being applied to 84,000 current PTSD claims, including 28,000 first-time claimants. Most of the others are claims previously denied that are being appealed, or that seek a higher disability evaluation for a veteran who already has a rating.

VA published a draft regulation in August 2009 seeking public comment. Most of the comments received disagreed with the new requirement that only VA mental-health experts can diagnose PTSD for a claimant to qualify for compensation.

In publishing its final regulation in the July 13 *Federal Register*, VA officials responded to critics by saying that it isn’t required to accept the diagnosis of an outside specialist, that VA staff are extensively trained to decide PTSD claims, and that given the number of cases they see, they are also better able to ensure consistency in how conditions are diagnosed and claims evaluated.

Tom Philpott, a former Coast Guardsman, has written about veterans and military issues for more than 30 years.



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NEW HOPE, NEW ORLEANS

Replacement VA medical center helps redefine a city's economic identity.

BY JEFF STOFFER AND STEVE BROOKS

The scars of Hurricane Katrina are fading. The Lower 9th Ward, where homes were ripped from their foundations and shattered by a gushing wall of floodwater in 2005, is now sprouting green-energy "Brad Pitt" houses with their elevated porches and undulating metal rooftops, designed to withstand nature's fiercest attacks – even if they do look like something out of a Salvador Dalí painting. The National World War II Museum continues to expand in both size and attendance, having doubled its footprint to two city blocks of a former warehouse district on the lower east end of downtown. "We could be at the vanguard of the recovery," says Stephen Watson, the museum's CEO, following a record-breaking month of attendance last spring. Roadways are buzzing. The French Quarter has regained its title as the party capital of the Southeast. And the Saints are the reigning Super Bowl champs. Could it be that New Orleans has come out of its nightmare and landed in a future it could only have dreamed of six years ago? If so, that future has as much to do with veterans as it does with philanthropic movie stars, museumgoers or football players. Ground was broken June 25 on a new 200-bed, \$995-million VA medical center that figures to be the cornerstone of a massive biomedical corridor planners say will produce thousands of jobs, attract billions in research dollars, heal the sick and write a bold new chapter in the Big Easy's stormy history.

"This is a historic day for all of Louisiana," VA Secretary Eric Shinseki said before turning one of the first shovelfuls of earth on the project. "With this ground-breaking, we begin rebuilding a new legacy, a new chapter in the history of this proud city."

The project is equally historic for VA, which has completed no new hospital-construction project since 1995, when the ribbon was cut at the West Palm Beach, Fla., VA Medical Center.

Nearly a decade has passed since VA launched a massive study into the cost, condition and long-term viability of all its health-care properties – medical centers, nursing homes and clinics – throughout the nation. The cost of maintaining surplus property, estimated at \$1 million a day at the time, was the stated reason behind the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services study. The 2004 report that came from CARES called for the closure of seven medical centers, and new missions for dozens of other facilities across the country.

One of the most eye-opening findings was that VA's 163 medical centers at the time averaged over 54 years in age, and few had adequately evolved from the era of multiday inpatient hospital treatment to today's outpatient-based model. VA's collection of hulking hospitals also did not often have the right architecture or infrastructure to install and use CT scanners and other high-tech imaging equipment that are now staples of medical care.

The CARES plan also called for the construction of overdue new medical centers in underserved veteran markets such as Denver, Las Vegas and Orlando, Fla., all of which are now being built.

The New Orleans VA Medical Center – which indeed fit the description, as both a half-century old and designed for an inpatient occupancy of nearly 500 patients – was not on the CARES radar.

Then the storm hit.

The high-rise downtown New Orleans VA hospital was immediately reduced to two floors above a parking garage. Patients were triaged at various locations around the city. Temporary clinics sprang into existence, and patients needing acute care were transported to hospitals as far away as San Antonio. As the months passed, the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System worked quickly to deliver care to some 40,000 VA patients who regularly use the system. Between leases and new construction, the system spent

more than \$28 million providing more than 40 points of health-care access for VA patients around the metropolitan area, and tripled its home-care efforts. A partnership with Tulane University Hospital and others in the region eased the pressure for acute care. "In the absence of a VA medical center, we have been able to keep most of our patients here," says Julie Catellier, director of the system. "We think that is a success story."

While the New Orleans VA Medical Center building was dramatically compromised by the hurricane, the 1939-built Louisiana State University-Charity Hospital, for low-income and uninsured patients, was obliterated by the storm, before it was flooded and then invaded by mold.

Larry Hollier, chancellor of the LSU Health Sciences Center, remembers that even prior to Katrina, the idea of a deeper collaboration between LSU-Charity and the New Orleans VA Medical

Center had long been discussed, as had visions for a major biomedical corridor leveraging the resources and services of the city's many medical institutions academically and otherwise, including

Xavier University, the University of New Orleans, the Louisiana Cancer Research Consortium and the BioInnovation Center, a new biotechnology-business incubator now under construction.

LSU and Tulane University have long provided resident physicians for the New Orleans VA Medical Center through affiliation relationships, which are common nationwide wherever VA hospitals and medical schools are in proximity. After the storm, those affiliations depended on commitments among all the partners involved to rebuild, and rebuild better than ever.

"I think it might have been in November after the hurricane," Hollier says. "And I asked them at VA what they were planning to do. They said, 'We'll be back in New Orleans, all 200 beds.'"

"And I said, 'Why don't we work together?'"

An early commitment of \$325 million in federal disaster-recovery funding gave the VA-hospital project a jump-start. That was followed by \$300 million in VA major-construction funding. Plans initially envisioned one VA-LSU campus footprint with shared utilities, parking and non-medical services like food and laundry, but with separate bed towers.

As plans evolved, property was secured, and \$500 million in FEMA funding was committed to replacement of LSU-Charity. Plans shifted to

"It will be the largest hospital-construction project in the world."

James McNamara, CEO, Greater New Orleans Bioscience Economic Development District

position the two medical centers on adjacent blocks covering 70 acres in the city's midsection. They will be joined by a covered walkway. "The closer you are, the stronger the affiliation," Catellier says. "We have designed this to look and feel like a contiguous site. It really is a legacy. That's why we call it the Legacy Project. It is being built for veterans who have yet to be born."

Along with a \$102-million project now under way for a new 250,000-square-foot Louisiana Cancer Research Consortium facility, and \$36 million for the BioInnovation business incubator, the pieces are swiftly coming together for an 2.4-square-mile integrated biomedical corridor stretching from the old Dixie Brewery, which was devastated by Katrina and condemned, to the Superdome.

The VA-hospital project includes 2,000 parking spaces; an imaging center with two MRI scanners, three CT scanners and one PET scanner; 23 treatment and examination rooms; eight operating rooms; and six procedure rooms. It will have 200 inpatient beds with capacity to double to 400. The 400,000 square feet of outpatient-care space is expected to handle 500,000 clinical visits a year.

More than 70,000 veterans a year are estimated to receive care at the new VA medical center after the project is completed in late 2013. The 424-bed replacement Charity Hospital is expected to be finished in June 2014.

Together, the new facilities are estimated to generate \$1.7 billion in annual economic impact, a welcome prospect after the hurricane's devastation and the unknown long-term effects of the BP oil spill. "Tourism is an important underpinning, but it is a weak underpinning," Hollier says. "Oil can be episodic. I think health care is the underpinning of the economic future of this city."

"It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," says American Legion Past National Commander Bill Detweiler of New Orleans, who has served on the advisory committee for the new VA medical center.

"It will be the largest hospital-construction project in the world," adds James McNamara, president and CEO of the Greater New Orleans Bioscience Economic Development District (GNOBEDD). "This is the most exciting time this city has had since they discovered oil."

McNamara says that by 2018, New Orleans should boast one of the top 10 unified medical districts in the country, and stand as a model for energy-efficient construction and maintenance. The development district aims to make New Orleans one of the first U.S. cities to be supported



Air Force veteran Ernest Hoitt looks over a model of the future New Orleans VA Medical Center at the June 25 ground-breaking ceremony for the complex. Patrick Semansky

by the U.N. Environment Programme. Envisioned are ample greenways, zero-carbon transportation, self-powering exterior lights, and solar- and wind-powered energy sources.

Planners foresee an economic metamorphosis taking shape as the corridor comes into existence. Within blocks of the corridor, new residential housing and business developments are expected to replace some of the properties that remain abandoned or blighted in the aftermath of the hurricane and floods. "I don't think there is another city in the country that will see an economic boost like this on health care," Hollier says.

Moreover, Detweiler adds, "This VA hospital is being built in such a way that it's going to be patient-friendly. We've done many focus groups, and those focus groups have been a key to the design. We're building on that basis. This will be a state-of-the-art facility."

"The first step was the commitment by VA," McNamara says. "That's the cornerstone we are building off of. That legitimized us."

"After the hurricanes, we had a decision to make: how did we want to rebuild?" Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal explained during the ground-breaking ceremony. "We absolutely wanted a world-class health-care system."

Thanks to a persevering community of veterans; VA employees and administrators who were equally resolute; the early commitment of government funds; and healthy medical-school affiliations, that is absolutely what New Orleans is getting. "You really get only one bite at this kind of apple," Catellier says. "So you've got to go for it." 🍏

For more information about this project, visit:
www.neworleans.va.gov/Project_Legacy.asp

Bob Vila ranks new 2011 EdenPURE® portable heater #1 in North America

U.S. designed and engineered GEN4 uses new Sylvania heat source and EdenFLOW direct air technology

Accept no imitations - portable heaters and fireplaces "dry out" the air with inefficient ceramic heating elements

Never be cold again

Bob Vila, America's Favorite Home Improvement Expert, Canton, Ohio

I know why millions of Americans are saving on their heating bills with the EdenPURE® Infrared Portable Heater.

And now you can save up to \$102 on the new 2011 EdenPURE® GEN 4, the finest portable heater in the world.

The new GEN 4 was designed and engineered in the USA and has several patented technological breakthroughs to save you money on your heating bill.

US engineers combined specially designed Sylvania Infrared Bulbs with the existing EdenPURE® copper heating chambers for more efficient heating. They even redesigned the air flow, resulting in amplified heating performance. The designers at EdenPURE® call this their "EdenFLOW Direct Air" technology.

For over 30 years as your home improvement television host, I have reviewed and experienced thousands of products. I have an EdenPURE® in my Massachusetts home and found it to be a very safe and reliable source of portable heat. This is one of those few comfort investments I can recommend for your home that will truly pay dividends.

We all know heating costs are expected to remain at record levels. The cost of heating our homes will continue to be a significant burden on the family budget. The EdenPURE® GEN4 can cut your heating bills, pay for itself in a matter of weeks, and then start putting a great deal of extra money in your pocket after that.

With over one million satisfied customers around the world, the new EdenPURE® heats better, faster, saves more on heating bills, and runs almost silent.

And that's just the start of the benefits of the new EdenPURE® GEN4 Portable Heater.

A major cause of residential fires in the United States is portable heaters. The choice of fire and safety professionals everywhere, the EdenPURE® has no exposed heating elements that can cause a fire.

The outside of the EdenPURE® only gets warm to



the touch so that it will not burn children or pets. And your pet may be just like my dog who has reserved a favorite spot near the EdenPURE®.

The EdenPURE® can also help you feel better. Unlike EdenPURE® imitators, it will not reduce humidity or oxygen in the room. These imitators use ceramic plates instead of our patented copper. The EdenPURE® GEN4 has over 1 pound of copper! Cheap ceramic plates reduce humidity, dry out your sinuses, make you more susceptible to illness, and make your skin dry. With other heating sources, you'll notice that you get sleepy when the heat comes on because they are burning up oxygen.

The advanced space-age EdenPURE® GEN4 also heats the room evenly, wall to wall and floor to ceiling. Other heating sources heat rooms unevenly with most of the heat concentrated high and to the center of the room. And as you know, portable heaters only heat an area a few feet around the heater. With the EdenPURE®, the temperature will not vary in any part of the room.

The EdenPURE®'s infrared heating source uses less energy to create heat than other sources. One of the primary reasons for this is that heat at combustion level, which is what other heat sources use, causes the heat to instantly rise to the ceiling. Therefore, the heat is not evenly distributed, causing a very inefficient and uncomfortable heat source.

The EdenPURE® GEN4 does not use burning heat. This heat actually floats out into the living area and is carried by the existing hu-

Cannot start a fire; a child or animal can touch or sit on it without harm



midity in the air. This causes the heat to travel rapidly and evenly throughout a room.

In actual studies, photos using infrared lighting demonstrated that the heat was almost perfectly even from floor to ceiling and wall to wall. The EdenPURE® advanced infrared efficiency is based on the distribution of energized air, not on just fan movement. This heat is called "soft heat" due to how comfortable it is.

How can a person cut their heating bill with the EdenPURE®? First, the EdenPURE® uses less energy to create heat than many other sources, but that is just part of why it will cut a person's heating bill. The EdenPURE® will heat a room in minutes. You will immediately notice the difference! Therefore, you can turn the heat down in your house to as low as 50 degrees, but the room you are occupying, which has the EdenPURE®, will be warm



and comfortable.

Your EdenPURE® GEN4 Portable easily rolls from room to room. Using zone heating keeps you comfortable and reduces your heating bills. This can drastically cut heating bills; in some instances, the savings may be substantial.

And the EdenPURE® can be your primary heat source for much of the Winter. Keep your furnace turned off or turned down and let the EdenPURE® do the job until you finally need to kick that expensive furnace on.

The EdenPURE® will pay for itself in weeks. It will keep a great deal of extra money in a user's pocket. Because of today's spiraling gas, oil, propane, and other energy costs, the EdenPURE® will provide even greater savings as time goes by.

With no increase in price, the new EdenPURE® GEN4 has been updated with the latest technology, safety, and comfort features to provide you with even greater comfort, more savings, and years of reliability.

The EdenPURE® GEN4 Portable Furnace comes with a comprehensive five year warranty and a 60-day, no questions asked, satisfaction guarantee - EdenPURE® will even pay for the return shipping. There is absolutely no risk. And EdenPURE® is the only portable heater with a National Service Network.

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During our special, you are eligible for a \$75 DIS-

COUNT PLUS FREE SHIPPING AND HANDLING FOR A TOTAL SAVINGS OF UP TO \$102 on the EdenPURE® GEN4. And now you can save an additional \$100 on new Personal Heaters for a total savings of \$192. This special offer expires in 10 days. If you order after that, we reserve the right to either accept or reject order requests at the discounted price. See my at-

tached Authorized Discount Coupon to take advantage of this savings opportunity.

The EdenPURE® carries a 60-day unconditional, no-risk guarantee. If you are not totally satisfied, return it at our expense and your purchase price will be refunded. No questions asked. There is also a 5-year warranty on all parts and labor for the GEN4 and a 3-year warranty for the Personal Heater.

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The price of the EdenPURE® GEN4 is \$472 plus \$27 shipping and handling and \$372 plus \$17 shipping and handling for the Personal Heater, but, with this Authorized Discount Claim Form, you will receive a \$75 discount, free shipping and handling and be able to get the EdenPURE® GEN4 for only \$397 delivered and the Personal Heater for only \$197 delivered. After 10 days we reserve the right to either accept or reject order requests at the discounted price.

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☐ Personal Heater, number _____
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☐ I am ordering within 10 days, therefore I get a \$175 discount, free shipping and handling and my price is only \$197 for the Personal Heater delivered.
☐ I am ordering past 10 days, therefore I pay full price of \$472 plus \$27 shipping & handling for GEN4 Heater and \$372 plus \$17 shipping & handling for the Personal Heater.

To claim your discount or by phone: call toll-free 1-800-630-8132. Operators are on duty Monday - Friday 6am - 3am, Saturday 7am - 12am and Sunday 7am - 11pm, EST. Give operator your Authorization Code on this coupon.

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A Legacy of Legion Giving

Gift annuities, charitable contributions extend The American Legion's reach.

A combat veteran earns an honorable discharge and believes he may be eligible for VA benefits. He turns to an American Legion department service officer for guidance that helps him and his family for the rest of their lives.

A teenager from a troubled home has choices to make. Should he take to the streets or to an American Legion Baseball diamond? A persistent coach wins the debate, and the boy discovers the power of teamwork, discipline and self-confidence.

At an American Legion job fair, a newly retired Marine Corps officer learns she is qualified for a management position at a regional medical center and schedules an interview that leads to a fulfilling and prosperous career.

In every corner of the country, in thousands of ways, lives are made better by the programs and services of The American Legion. Often, those who receive life-changing help from the Legion wish to give something back to the organization as a whole, or to a specific program that helped them.

American Legion assistance comes in many forms. The National Emergency Fund helps put roofs over the heads of families made homeless by natural disasters. The Child Welfare Foundation delivers grant money for programs that tackle such difficult issues as autism, neglect and substance abuse. The Temporary Financial Assistance program uses American Legion Endowment Fund dollars to help needy military families with minor children at home. Operation Comfort Warriors helps wounded troops endure

long hospital stays with comfort items that don't get a budget line on government spreadsheets.

"Very little of this kind of service would exist if not for the generosity of The American Legion family and friends," National Treasurer George A. Buskirk Jr. said. "Dues allow us to operate. Charitable contributions allow us to go farther and make an important impact beyond our ongoing programs."

American Legion Charities is a new arm of the organization that allows contributors to precisely choose which programs or funds they want their donations to benefit. A new National Headquarters booklet supports the division by explaining the various ways to plan a gift to The American Legion. The Legion is also initially licensed in five states – Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Indiana and Virginia – to offer charitable gift annuities with substantial tax benefits and locked-in returns.

"Typically, there are substantial tax benefits to donating to American Legion Charities or investing in the gift-annuity program," Buskirk said. "Also, it's important for contributors to remember that The American Legion covers administrative costs out of the general fund, which means donated dollars go directly to their intended purpose, not to overhead."

A new page at www.legion.org will be unveiled this fall, making it easy for donors to choose the programs they wish to help and then give using a credit card.



Media Bakery

In recent months, The American Legion has streamlined its charitable-donations and planned-giving programs to make them easier and more convenient than ever. Here are just some of the new and evolving developments in American Legion giving:

The American Legion Charities – 501(c) 3

Newly formed to make giving easier and more convenient than ever, The American Legion Charities program allows contributors to designate specific areas within the organization they wish to help fund. For instance, a Boys Nation alum might like to dedicate 50 percent of his donation to that program and the rest to a range of Legion services, or a veteran who got help from a service officer may wish to contribute only to the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation program. The American Legion Finance Commission oversees the distribution of funds not designated for a specific program.

To learn more about The American Legion Charities program, contact:

Bill Pease
Director of American Legion Fundraising
The American Legion
5745 Lee Road
Indianapolis, IN 46216
bpease@legion.org

Visit the new American Legion Donate page to learn more or give online:  www.legion.org/donate

American Legion Planned Giving

Numerous tax advantages exist for those who make The American Legion part of their estate planning. Gifts of cash, marketable securities, real estate, collectibles, life-insurance policies and other personal property are popular ways for Legionnaires and friends to contribute from their estates. Memorial bequests and charitable-annuity investments can leave a "Legion Legacy" for future generations.

To learn more about American Legion Planned Giving, contact:

Michael Pirnat
Deputy Director of Planned Giving
The American Legion
5745 Lee Road
Indianapolis, IN 46216
(317) 860-3006
mpirnat@legion.org

Download an American Legion Planned Giving booklet:

 www.legion.org/donate

The American Legion Charitable-Gift Annuity Program

The American Legion is now licensed to offer charitable-gift annuities in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia. An investment in the future of The American Legion, a charitable annuity provides a federal income-tax deduction in the year the gift is made; guaranteed lifetime competitive interest rate; a portion of which is nontaxable income; reduced capital-gains taxes if the gift is in the form of an appreciated asset; and the ability for the giver to designate specific programs and funds from a list of seven: American Legion Boys Nation, American Legion Baseball, The American Legion National High School Oratorical Scholarship Program, the Child Welfare Foundation, The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund, The American Legion Endowment Fund Corp., and the National Emergency Fund.

To learn more about The American Legion Charitable Gift Annuity Program, contact:

Paul Allen
Charitable Gift Annuity Representative
and Retired National Finance Director
The American Legion
315 Cobble Springs Court
Avon, IN 46123-8604
(877) 534-4668 (toll-free)
legionannuity@sbcglobal.net

The American Legion Endowment Fund

An American Legion fundraising effort in 1925 generated an astonishing \$5 million to help veterans and their children in the post-World War I years. That effort gave birth to The American Legion Endowment Fund Corp., which has since delivered nearly \$25 million to disabled veterans, military families and orphans. This fund is used to provide more than \$500,000 a year in Temporary Financial Assistance for military families with minor children at home.

Send donations to:

The American Legion Endowment Fund
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206

To donate online:

 www.legion.org/donate

Child Welfare Foundation

Created by The American Legion and formed as a distinct nonprofit organization in 1953, the Child Welfare Foundation provides grant money for organizations that help young people with mental, physical or spiritual challenges. The foundation awards over \$600,000 in grants each year to various nonprofit organizations that work in those areas.

For more information, visit:

 www.legion.org/childwelfare

 www.legion.org/donate

Donations can also be sent to:

Executive Secretary
The American Legion
Child Welfare Foundation
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206

The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund

Created shortly after 9/11, this fund provides college-scholarship money for the children of U.S. military personnel killed on duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001. While the fund has gradually been building over the years, it has already issued dozens of scholarship awards.

To donate online:

 www.legion.org/donate

Donations can also be sent to:

American Legion Legacy Scholarship
P.O. Box 1055
Indianapolis, IN 46206

National Emergency Fund

When tornadoes, floods, hurricanes and wildfires strike, the National Emergency Fund provides immediate financial relief for Legionnaires, posts and families. Since its inception in the late 1960s, the fund has delivered more than \$6 million in cash grants to qualified recipients. The program is administered by the Legion's Internal Affairs Division.

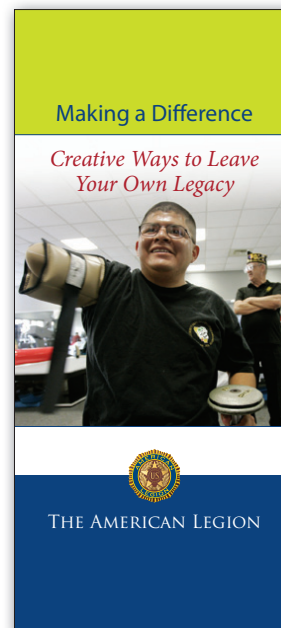
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Download a new booklet describing
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Operation Comfort Warriors

U.S. military personnel who are wounded or become ill while deployed receive top medical care from the Department of Defense but sometimes lack comfort items – music, DVDs, sweat suits, tennis shoes, video games and books, etc. – to help them pass the time while in a hospital or transition center. The American Legion recognizes this need with one of its marquee programs, Operation Comfort Warriors, which has distributed hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of comfort items to recovering troops since 2006.

To learn more or to give:

 www.legion.org/troops/operationcomfort

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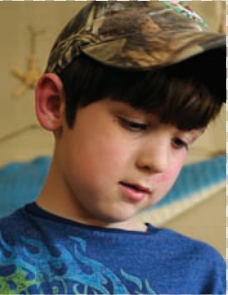


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Behind the Blue Star



Their patriotism is tested every day. Blue Star families are those with loved ones at war, and they live in a world of uncertainty. Much of the time, they live like single parents, holding their



households together on their own. When their loved ones come home, they often struggle to readjust until the next deployment.

Sometimes, they get the call all military families fear. Each family is



different, but if there's one thing nearly all of them share, it's the belief that few others fully understand what they are going through.

STORIES BY
KEN OLSEN

PHOTOS BY
AMY C. ELLIOTT



Op-tempo from hell

Military families struggle with the greatest homefront challenge of the war.

On a girls' night out near Fort Bragg, N.C., Rebekah Sanderlin and her friends went around their circle and talked about which antidepressant each of them was taking. These military wives shared exhaustion, isolation and anxiety. They were mothers struggling to raise small children largely on their own because their husbands were deployed over and over again. They believed no end was in sight.

"My husband's been gone about 60 of the last 80 months," says Sanderlin, a journalist, Army wife and mother of two. "After so many years of war, I think people feel like, 'OK, you have this down.' Instead, we are worn down."

Military families across the country echo this fatigue and frustration in national surveys as nine years of repeated combat deployments exact a significant personal toll. They believe few Americans understand or appreciate their sacrifices. They are determined to remain resilient, yet worry they cannot maintain the current pace of deploy-

ments – op-tempo, in military lingo. Additional military family programs, congressional proclamations, lapel pins and yellow-ribbon magnets won't touch the problem, they say. Deployments have to be shorter, less frequent or both. The troops have to spend more time at home.

"The strain on military families is immense," says Christina Piper, a veteran, soldier's wife, mother and co-founder of the blog "Her War, Her Voice." "The constant deployments, the constant separation, the constant worry of injury and death are taking a toll," says Piper, whose family is stationed in California. "We've been in nine years of anticipatory grief. You don't fault spouses of cancer patients for needing help, and military families are in the same situation."

As the faltering economy diverts attention from

Army wife Rebekah Sanderlin and her daughter, Rudy, live in Fayetteville, N.C., where Sanderlin writes a blog, Operation Marriage, for a newspaper.

the two-front war now being fought by our nation's all-volunteer force, military families are in crisis, Sanderlin says. "Everybody's hitting the wall. As a nation, I think we're going to see that families' needs cannot go unaddressed any longer." Otherwise, "I think you are going to see an increase in child abuse – when young spouses with no coping skills are left behind for the third time – an increase in divorce, an increase in suicides."

The Hidden Cost of War.

Military families already are in trouble. Wives of deployed soldiers have far higher rates of depression, anxiety, sleep disorders and other problems than other military spouses, says research epidemiologist Alyssa Mansfield, whose groundbreaking study of more than 250,000 Army wives was published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* last January.

"This is very different for families than earlier wars," says Mansfield, who works for the Behavioral Health Epidemiology Program at RTI International in Research Triangle Park, N.C. "Soldiers are deployed multiple times for lengthy periods. This is insurgent warfare, so anybody (not just combat troops) traveling the roads in Iraq or Afghanistan is in danger."

E-mail, Skype and cell-phone communication between soldiers and families can suddenly cease for several days any time someone in a unit is killed. Spouses at home are left to wait in silence, wondering who is now widowed.

"It's so stressful and intense and dark when they miss one of our communications," Piper says. "(Even when there isn't a communications black-out), we have a lot more information about how our husbands might get injured or killed."

Help isn't always easy to come by. The military's mental-health system is strained caring for returning soldiers. "Spouses are often told to see a professional off base, and they may just say, 'Forget it,'" says Mansfield, who analyzed the medical records of families of soldiers who were deployed at any time between 2003 and 2006. She cautions that her findings understate the magnitude of the problem, because she only studied Army wives and the health-care system doesn't openly identify everyone who is struggling. Also, there's relatively little medical information available about the well-being

of National Guard and reserve families, who may lack the support of a close-knit military community and live too far from bases to use their family programs.

"We have no idea of the real mental-health cost," Mansfield says. "I'm sure there are tens of thousands of other families who are struggling. The problem is bigger than what a prescription would fix."

The Army says it's addressed the problem in part by increasing child-care services available on base. "Household responsibilities, along with complete responsibility for the physical and emotional needs of their children, can challenge the coping skills of the most resilient spouse," says Rene J. Robichaux, social-work

programs manager for the U.S. Army Medical Command.

Family members can access, either in person or via the Internet, a variety of support services through Army Community Services at each military installation, she adds. And the Army plans to increase the span of time between deployments, a move overwhelmed spouses have long urged. Yet, Army officials haven't given a date for the change or an estimate of how much time soldiers will have at home between deployments.

Married to the Military. Just about everything is stacked against young military couples. Their first

STRETCHED THIN

Deployment lengths, by military branch, during the global war on terror

Army	12, 15 and 18 months
Air Force	Normal deployment is six months
Marines	Seven to 12 months
Navy	Six and 12 months

TUNE IN TO LEGION TV



Military spouses tell their stories in a mini-documentary by filmmaker Amy C. Elliott.

www.legion.org/magazine

post is likely their first experience living away from home, Sanderlin says. If a soldier marries his high-school sweetheart, he probably went back home to get her after basic training and dropped her off at his military base.

"She's probably pregnant and they are living on a private's salary," Sanderlin adds. "You talk to anybody who's been a team leader or a platoon leader and they will tell you about a young guy who leaves his wife with no food, no money and goes off to training – not because he's mean, but because he's 19."

When Sanderlin married in March 2003, she had a college degree, had worked as a journalist for several years, and had lived on her own in a few different cities. She was 28 when she had her first child. Even with those advantages, "it's been very difficult," Sanderlin says.

She moved to Fayetteville, N.C., two days after her wedding. Her husband deployed two weeks later. She left her job and her professional identity just before her son was born, and was ambushed by postpartum depression. "I was overwhelmed. I was miserable. I couldn't figure out why – I had this happy, healthy baby."

Once her husband returned and the couple settled into a routine, he told her she wasn't herself. She sought help. "Leaving work was a big transition, having him deployed was a big transition, having a baby was a big transition," she says. "And it all hit at once."

Eighteen months after she left her reporting job at *The Fayetteville Observer*, the newspaper invited Sanderlin to write a blog. That blog, Operation Marriage, helped her shake the depression and sustain herself during deployments. "There have been times with the other deployments that the blog was my main source of adult interaction," Sanderlin says. "My heart goes out to other spouses who don't have that."

More often, depression goes unnoticed. "Your closest connection is thousands of miles away in a war zone," she says.

The demands of young children further isolate the spouses. And if a young couple moves every two years, as is common, it's difficult to get to know anyone in the local community. Even when military spouses have close friends, they are reluctant to complain. Quite often, the other friend is also a military spouse who is also enduring a deployment.

Meanwhile, they are overwhelmed with worry. "The fear is really, really bad," Sanderlin says. "Speaking for myself and my friends, we get a sense of dread when an unfamiliar car drives down the street because you think someone is coming to tell you bad news."

There is a barrage of other stresses. In their first few years of marriage, Sanderlin's husband was deployed right before and after the deaths of her grandmother, aunt and grandfather. Then, in a two-week stretch in 2008, Sanderlin found out that

she was pregnant, her husband was being deployed again, her father had six months to live, and she had a potentially cancerous spot in her

mouth that could not be biopsied because of her pregnancy. Although the spot turned out to be benign, "I lived with that worry for a year," she says.

 "When our husbands are gone, we feel like we are deployed with them."

Rebekah Sanderlin

Readjustment Blues. Military spouses have a three-word shorthand for the unending deployment cycle: wait, honeymoon, suck. Wait for their soldier to come home, enjoy a brief honeymoon, and then things "suck" as a couple tries to re-connect and re-establish a two-parent household.

"If he's gone a year, it takes a year for us to adjust to him," Sanderlin says. "There are lots of parenting things they miss. They miss big chunks of development time. They don't know the rules that apply. It's like having a houseguest who doesn't know where anything is kept but is really pushy and insists on doing things."

After nine years, this deployment cycle is excruciating. "There's a lot of discussion among military spouses about what's worse: deployment or re-integration," Sanderlin says. "All of us would rather have our husbands home than not. The challenge is getting life back to normal. You never really hit your stride."

And parenting is awkward, Piper adds. "He doesn't know when to step in with the kids. You don't know when to let him. By the time you get organized and back into being married, he's gone again."

Dread about the next deployment begins immediately. "You wonder, 'Will he come home next time?'" Piper says. There are constant reminders of that next time. Piper says her family received the telephone call notifying her husband of his third

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deployment as they were returning from vacation soon after his second deployment. "We get to prepare for goodbye, before we've ever said hello."

Although the Army has increased the time between deployments to a year, that doesn't mean families get another 12 months to regain their footing. Soldiers spend substantial time attending schools and training for the next tour, and some draw temporary duty assignments away from their

home bases. This means Piper has seen her husband about half the year he's been back from Afghanistan.

"My husband gets four days off every 28 days," Piper says. "So even when our soldiers are here, they are not here."

The Army has tried to ease deployment demands since the surge in Iraq ended in August 2008, but it's a significant challenge. "Stretched by commit-

Fort Hood shootings leave lasting effect on Army wife, mother

Angi Cunningham didn't believe her husband's friend when he called Nov. 5 to warn that a gunman had opened fire on his fellow soldiers at Fort Hood, Texas. "He said, 'There's been a shooting. Get inside.' I thought he was joking."

She had just returned home after picking up her son from a half day of school. After one look at the TV news, Angi and her husband, who happened to be home, gathered the children and retreated to the upstairs master bedroom, hoping they were out of the line of fire. They put mattresses over the window as rumors spread that the shooter was in Comanche 3, the family's housing development on post. They got a call from the worried parents of a child they were baby-sitting.

Angi's fear spiked. "I'm getting told they are shooting in the village where I'm living," she recalls, her voice echoing the disbelief she felt at the time.

They heard there were four shooters. Then the news erroneously reported that the gunman had gone to a theater. "The misinformation was rampant."

Soldiers from her husband's unit called continuously, looking for reassurance. "Can you see my wife's car?" one asked. "I heard the shooting was at the PX, and I know she was going shopping today."

Cell-phone service was severed, and all they could do was watch the news, wait and worry.

The stress didn't ease after police critically wounded and apprehended the alleged shooter, Maj. Nidal Hasan. Angi spotted a couple of soldiers as she neared the entrance to her son's school the next day and panicked: "It really freaks you out to find out it was one of your own." She began to worry about any stranger in uniform.

She was outraged at the news that Hasan's supervisors at Walter Reed Army Medical Center were concerned about his behavior but allowed him to move to Fort Hood anyway, and that the DoD had intercepted some of Hasan's disturbing e-mails but hadn't taken action.

"That almost made me more upset," she says. "They should have watched him more closely."

The family had moved into base housing from a rental in nearby Killeen to be safer during her husband's deployment. Long after the incident, that irony remains

unsettling to the 25-year-old mother. "It still creeps up on me. Anybody anywhere could snap."

This isn't what she envisioned when she agreed to follow her husband wherever his military career led. He switched from the National Guard to the Army in January 2007 after construction work in Ohio evaporated. He told Angi they had the choice of living in Kansas or Texas, but he thought, "Texas would be more fun." She was up for anything. They threw their belongings in the back of their Ford pickup, scrunched together in the front seat and headed south.

"That was probably one of our least thought-out plans," she says with a laugh.

Angi grew up in a Marine Corps family and remembers sitting on a box eating TV dinners during the course of her father's frequent transfers. She only vaguely remembers his deployments, beyond his homecoming from Desert Storm on her seventh birthday. She doesn't recall any of it being difficult, a credit to her mother.

Moving to Killeen was both an adventure and a challenge. Not knowing what to expect and not knowing the seasons, Angi was surprised to learn that winter in central Texas lasts a month and "a quarter-inch of snow is a once-in-a-lifetime blizzard." She was shocked to see the first power bill once they turned on their air conditioning, and she was discouraged to learn just how far she was from family.

One Christmas while her husband was deployed, Angi made a 14-hour drive to St. Louis with her 1-year-old daughter and 3-year-old son so they could spend the holidays with her father; they then drove another 10 hours to West Virginia to visit her mother and in-laws. "I came back so stressed out the doctor had to put me on Valium for a week," Angi says. That was the last big road trip.

When her cousin died in a boating accident the following April, she loaded the car again and prepared to head to West Virginia for the funeral. "I wrestled with myself all night about going," Angi says. "One of the hardest moments was admitting I couldn't do the 24-hour drive." That left her alone with her grief and the guilt of not going to the funeral of one of her closet childhood friends.

Angi also worked hard to plug in with the military

ments in Iraq and Afghanistan,” Army spokesman Wayne V. Hall says, “Army leaders continue to struggle to give soldiers more time at home with their families (and) away from the war zone.”

“You Signed Up For This.” The civilian-military divide is exacerbated by mythology and misinformation, Sanderlin says. “I would love to debunk the ‘you-signed-up-for-this’ mentality. It seems like

there is an element of the population who doesn’t see it as a sacrifice so much as a bad career choice. That hurts.

“I don’t think the general public understands what life is like day to day for members of the military and their families. There are families who are on their sixth or seventh deployment. And when our husbands are gone, we feel like we are deployed with them.”



community at Fort Hood. She volunteered to make telephone calls to half of the 260 families in her unit’s family-readiness group, and made sure every soldier had a warm welcome home from deployment, even if family couldn’t be there. She helped a mother who was harassed by her deployed son’s bill collectors and wives who had not heard from their husbands. She told reluctant families where to get assistance. “A lot of people are afraid something will happen if the Army finds out they asked for help,” she says.

She leaned on her mother, who had been through it before. “I love my mother – she’s a bucket of knowledge,” Angi says. “She talks me out of my stupid ideas,” such as the temptation to give her husband’s commander what-for after a surprise training trip to the field meant the supper she cooked was for naught.

She prepared her son, daughter and stepson to move again. They transferred to Fort Drum, N.Y., last spring. It was a relief to leave Fort Hood for a smaller base in a

Angi Cunningham, who grew up a Marine’s daughter and married a soldier, has relied on her mother for advice during her husband’s deployments. Her family was living at Fort Hood, Texas, when last November’s shootings occurred.

landscape that feels more like home to her family, although she can’t entirely escape. A gas-station attendant in upstate New York, who thought Hasan had died, asked if things were back to normal at Fort Hood. “There hasn’t been much of a public update on the situation, which has led a lot of people to almost forget the event ever happened,” Angi says. “Part of me wants to yell, ‘Hey, what about us?’ But then the other part of me realizes most of the country was not affected by this tragedy.”

Angi wants to move on, too. “I have decided I cannot live in fear of a repeat of what happened on Fort Hood,” she says. “Granted, some days it’s easier to say that than to feel it. But I give every place and person the benefit of the doubt unless shown otherwise.”

Amid the recession, military families also hear grumbling from civilians who envy their jobs and health-care plans, and who mistakenly believe that soldiers earn handsome wages and overtime pay. "All of that misinformation causes a lack of sympathy, and that lack of sympathy is hard," Sanderlin says. "Army wives aren't killing themselves because life is good."

Gestures of moral support often do little to

ease the burden. When a magnet appears on the back of a car declaring "I support the troops," Piper says, "The first question I want to ask is how? And where did that five bucks (for the magnet) go? Where was that magnet made?"

She says it meant far more to her to walk out her front door near Fort Campbell, Ky., during one of her husband's deployments and find that someone

Marine wife: 'I choose to thrive in this lifestyle'

Milinda Rau has been through four combat tours since 1999 and knows her husband will soon be tapped for a fifth. She's dealt with multiple moves as well as her husband's frequent departures for training and other assignments. For her, it's all about attitude.

"I love being a Marine wife," Milinda says as her family prepares to move from Quantico, Va., back to Camp Lejeune, N.C., in advance of her husband's next overseas tour. "I don't believe this is a train wreck I'm going to survive. I choose to thrive in this lifestyle."

Milinda's perspective is in stark contrast to the sentiment expressed by many Army, National Guard and Reserve families as the nation nears a decade at war. Part of it may be the difference in combat tours. Marine Corps deployments last

seven to 12 months, while Army tours have stretched to 18 months. And part of it may be the Marine Corps itself.

"Leadership is taught that the ability of the Marine to do his job depends upon supporting the family," Milinda says. "Commanders are accountable for this, and they are assessed from the family level and the official level."

Although her stepfather was a veteran and commander of an American Legion post in Cottage Grove, Ore., she was not sold on the military life. It took her husband two years to talk her into the Marines while he was in college.

"I went into the Marine Corps after five years of marriage and with two kids," she says. "That was very unusual at the time. That also helped with my ability to manage challenges."

Milinda and her husband have three children, now 22, 20 and 16. He went to Bosnia in 1999, and deployed three weeks after 9/11. "We didn't know where he was going or

how long he was going to be gone," Milinda says. He came home from Afghanistan four months later.

Milinda's husband was then pulled out of professional school in early 2003 – rare for a Marine officer – and sent to Iraq for five months. That was followed by a move to Camp Lejeune, and then a seven-month tour in Iraq beginning in December 2004.

"That was probably the toughest of the deployments," Milinda says. "He was gone my son's senior year of high school."

Things were so hectic

that she carried a color-coded calendar so she knew when each child needed to be at lacrosse practice, a track meet or other activity. That fourth deployment was also more difficult because Milinda's husband was attached to a unit from Camp Pendleton, Calif., while the rest of the family was back at Camp Lejeune.

"If your husband is attached to a unit (based) thousands of miles away, it's easy for your unit to forget about you," Milinda says. "You don't have that connection that the families of the battalion have."



Milinda Rau and her husband, Lt. Col. Matthew Rau, appreciate recent improvements to the Marine Corps' family-readiness programs.

mowed her lawn, and for someone to tell her daughter, “Hey, you are a great kid. I hope your dad comes home soon.”

Program Overload. Families credit the military for expanding child-care services and for creating a corps of counselors who see families in the privacy of their homes. Called Military Family Life Consultants, the counselors don’t take notes and don’t report up the chain of command. Thirty-five

In this hectic life, Milinda has been deeply involved in the Marines’ family-support efforts. She has logged 13 years as a volunteer with family-readiness groups wherever her husband has been stationed. Along the way, she has seen several positive changes, including Marine Corps funding of family programs, instead of leaving battalion wives to put on bake sales and other fundraisers as they once did. She has also helped transform the family-readiness coordinator’s position from a volunteer job that fell on the backs of Marine wives to a paid, professional family-readiness officer.

“I think everybody at all levels of the Marine Corps was feeling the strain of managing their own households” and had trouble operating the family-readiness programs themselves, Milinda says. “We needed to professionalize and standardize support so you knew what was going to be there and you knew how to plug into it.”

Senior officers and senior enlisted Marines also pushed the Corps to modernize its family-support programs. That prompted the Marine Corps commandant, his wife and the sergeant major of the Marine Corps to visit every installation in 2007 and invite families to speak freely about their concerns.

“They listened and took that back and said, ‘We need to fix it,’” Milinda says. “There was a program in place by 2008. That’s unprecedented.”

The shift goes beyond programs, she adds. “The biggest change is how much ownership the commander feels. I think that makes a huge impact on the families. I think it’s here to stay.”

For the past year, Milinda has worked as the family-readiness officer for the Wounded Warrior Regiment at Quantico. Once her family is settled at Camp Lejeune, she will volunteer to help the family-readiness program that supports her husband’s unit, because she believes her experience can help lighten the load for other Marine families.

“I understand how difficult it is for a lot of our families,” Milinda says. “It’s not without its challenges. (But) you don’t have to let it destroy you.”

were sent to Fort Hood for three months in the aftermath of last November’s shootings.

Yet, more programs will not alleviate the stress military families feel. “These are some wonderful programs,” says Mansfield, the epidemiologist who studied Army wives. “But there are still significant problems in these families. Something else needs to be done.”

Military spouses agree.

“Believe me, the military is doing as much as it can,” Piper says. “But we don’t have time for the programs. With the op-tempo and the stress the families are under, there’s hardly time to go to the bathroom, much less find a baby sitter so we can go to counseling.”

Military-family support services simply will not catch up until the wars have been over for a while, Sanderlin predicts. “There’s not enough people, energy and money to address all of the needs. I don’t know one military spouse who would want to have one dollar diverted from soldiers, from training, from treating PTSD.”

The most effective solution – dialing back the op-tempo – will not only help families but will strengthen the fighting force, they say. “If the family is having problems, the soldier is going to know about it,” Piper says. “I don’t want the soldier fighting next to my husband distracted by his family.”

Sanderlin says trimming long Army deployments is a good starting point.

“I personally think if we’re going to make it sustainable for the next 10 years, we’re going to have to have shorter deployments,” Sanderlin says. Other branches of the military already use shorter deployments. The Marine Corps primarily has seven-month tours. The Air Force deploys its people for four to six months.

Sanderlin sees two other options: expand the fighting force so more soldiers share the load, and reduce the number of deployments any one individual faces. Or take a page from oil companies, which built living compounds in the Middle East to allow U.S. families to live near spouses working in oil fields.

“I could move to India or Pakistan, and he could come home every two weeks or every month,” Sanderlin says.

Until there are significant changes, families like Piper’s, Sanderlin’s and tens of thousands of others have no choice but to endure.

“Every time he leaves,” Sanderlin says, “I never expect to see him again.” 🌿



‘A lot for a country to ask’

Far from the active-duty community, Guard and reserve families feel isolated.

Stacy Bannerman ate her holiday meals at a local diner during her husband’s last National Guard deployment. She left an empty place setting across from her as families crowded the tables around her.

As lonely as she felt, that’s more routine than remarkable for Bannerman and other National Guard and reserve families. Unlike their active-duty counterparts in the war on terrorism, most Guardsmen and reservists don’t live near military bases, have a community of friends who share their experience, or have access to the family support and mental-health programs introduced on military bases in the past decade. Scattered across rural areas or blended into big cities, National Guard and Reserve families are also largely invisible to civilians.

“I cannot overemphasize the sense of social isolation,” says Bannerman, whose husband was first deployed shortly after they moved to Kent,

Wash., in early 2004. “There was nobody else in my situation. It was a difficult, lonesome time – one I hadn’t anticipated and one I didn’t have any support for.”

Families feel this isolation in communities as small as Hayward, Wis., where Crystal Gordon knows just one other National Guard wife with a husband in the war zone. “I don’t think the community even knows there’s a unit from here that’s serving in Iraq,” Gordon says.

The isolation is equally prevalent in major metropolitan areas like Phoenix, where Virginia Lynch awaited the return of her husband’s Guard detachment from its second tour.

“We don’t have that really tight-knit community, and our lives aren’t geared around the military,”

Crystal Gordon, whose husband is deployed to Iraq, plays with their son, Dane. In Hayward, Wis., where they live, she knows just one other National Guard wife whose husband is overseas.

Lynch says. "The hardest thing is the loneliness."

Even active-duty families point out the disparities. "National Guard and reserve don't have the support the families of active-duty soldiers do, and active-duty families are having a hard time," says Christina Piper, a veteran, Army wife and co-founder of the blog site "Her War, Her Voice."

Surprise Mobilization. Guard and reserve families struggled the first time their loved ones were summoned to Iraq and Afghanistan. They expected their citizen-soldiers to drill one weekend a month and two weeks a year, and respond to periodic natural disasters. Instead, they became full-time combat troops serving overseas in the global war on terror soon after 9/11.

"I was so stunned, I was in a fog," Lynch recalls of her husband's sudden departure for southern Iraq. "Everything happened so fast. We didn't even have a family-resource group."

Gordon discarded plans for a July wedding and went to the courthouse soon after her future husband got news of his first deployment in February 2003.

Bannerman's husband got the phone call that October, "I was totally sideswiped," she says.

Bannerman's husband left on Valentine's Day 2004. She passed the time by working at a nonprofit agency, taking her dogs for walks, and withdrawing into herself. She exchanged e-mails with her husband and talked to him on the telephone a couple of times a week, sensing that he was shutting down, particularly when there were casualties in his unit.

"He was pretty contained about what he was saying. 'How are you? I miss you. Send some brownies.' The conversations after the casualties had a very different tone. Those just made me feel sad and scared."

Anxiety and stress dogged her. Her husband was stationed at Camp Anaconda, Iraq, a base so frequently attacked that soldiers nicknamed it "Mortaritaville." She was troubled as she watched

U.S. government officials make their case for going into Iraq. "I paid attention. I needed to know what his sacrifice was going to be for. I needed to know what I was giving up a year and a half of marriage for."

Meanwhile, in Phoenix, Lynch learned that her oldest son, then entering first grade, had an autism spectrum disorder. She struggled to help him understand that his father, training for deployment at Fort Bliss, Texas, wasn't already in the combat zone.

"My son was convinced Saddam Hussein would fly to El Paso and hurt my husband," Lynch says. "For kids on the autism spectrum, everything is either very dangerous or very safe. There is no middle ground."

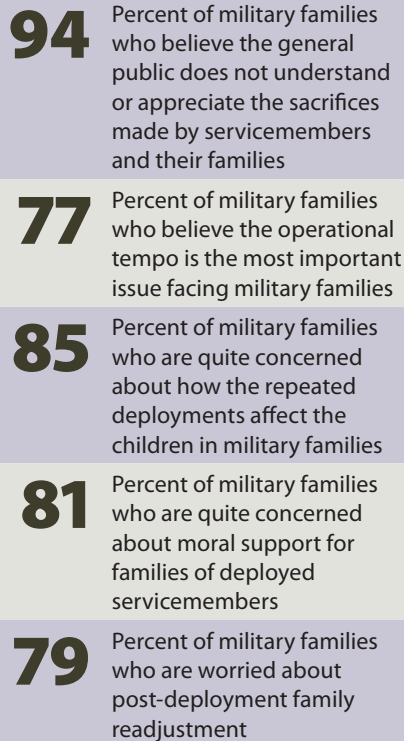
Gordon fared better that first deployment. She went to college, worked, and joined an archery league with her sister and father. She also lived with another National Guard spouse in Duluth, Minn. "We were both going through the same thing."

Fractured Homefront. The Bannermans' marriage came apart after he returned. The couple couldn't reconnect. Things that keep a soldier alive and functioning in combat – hyper-vigilance, emotional withdrawal – can kill a relationship. Her

husband also could find no peers to help him in his transition home. "He's with his buddies 24/7 for a year and then suddenly he's not," Bannerman says. "The Guard and reserve guys are forced to decompress apart from the people who are able to understand what they are going through."

Frustrated over what happened, Bannerman packed up and went to Washington to lobby on behalf of veterans and military families. "It was never about not loving him," she says. "There was a part of me that felt like I was going to die if I stayed."

Gordon, meanwhile, found conversation awkward when her husband came home on R&R during his first deployment. "You get used to communicating with letters and e-mail for a year,



Source: Military Life Issues Survey, Blue Star Families

and then when you are face to face, you are at a loss for words,” Gordon says.

Lynch wondered if her husband would come home at all. He had emergency gall bladder surgery in Iraq near the end of his deployment and, unbeknownst to her, developed complications and was flown to Germany. He was too weak to call and tell her how he was faring. “I didn’t know if he was living or dead for a few days,” Lynch says.

Her husband spent the next seven months at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, where doctors discovered that his left hepatic duct had accidentally been sliced during his surgery. Lynch went to see him once, and he visited Phoenix twice, including for their 10th wedding anniversary, with a tube coming out of his side. He finally returned home in August 2005, 20 months after he deployed.

Lynch spent the next year trying to get reimbursed for her family’s travel to San Antonio and to straighten out her husband’s pay, fouled by the fact that he was never given orders to transfer back to the United States. She finally gave up. “You’d call somebody and they would tell you, ‘That’s not my job,’” she says. “That was an expensive endeavor for us.”

Health care is a problem for Guard and reserve families even if they don’t have a loved one in a military hospital thousands of miles from home. Those living in rural areas have difficulty finding mental-health providers who accept TRICARE, the federal insurance for military families, Bannerman says. And it’s nearly impossible to find a rural counselor or therapist who has the military-family expertise available at bases and military medical centers.

“Significant disparities remain between the mental-health programs and support for Guard and reserve and what’s available for active-duty folks living on or near a military base,” says Bannerman, who now lives in southern Oregon. In 2007, one Guardsman said that when he and his wife reached out for marriage counseling prior to his deployment, they felt the few sessions they received “were a favor to us, and that we were taking up a resource meant for active-duty soldiers from the base.”

Guard and reserve families also lose their federal health insurance 180 days after deployment ends. This often leaves them with no coverage for the

bulk of the time between deployments as the recession and repeated tours cost them their day jobs. As much as half of Oregon’s 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team expected to be unemployed once off active duty this summer, and their families are going to be without health insurance,” Bannerman says.

The federal law that prohibits firing or laying off Guardsmen and reservists as a result of a deployment is full of loopholes, she adds. Even if a soldier has a case, “when you are preparing for that next deployment, you don’t have time to fight it.”

No Personal Security. The deployments have eroded Gordon’s sense of personal security in the

small Wisconsin town where she and her husband now live. “Almost everyone overlooks the safety of the family when a soldier deploys,” Gordon says. “Unfortunately, we are targets.”

Crystal Gordon

She doesn’t hang a yellow ribbon outside her home or display a Blue Star flag in her

window. “Anyone who drives by can guess there is a woman living alone in that house,” Gordon says. She’s careful not to wear any of the “Half My Heart is in Iraq” or “Caution: Going Through a Deployment” T-shirts. “I want to shout to the world that my husband is a soldier and is in Iraq and I’m proud of him,” Gordon says. “I just can’t. It’s very sad. It isolates me further.”

Gordon doesn’t even tell casual acquaintances about her husband’s status. “They just might be the one person who would be extrasupportive and willing to help me out a bit,” she says. “But I’ll never know that because I need to keep my mouth shut in public. I’m guessing that this is not an issue on a military base.”

Gordon doesn’t hear much from her civilian friends, even those who know the situation. “I just wish someone would come and mow the lawn once in a while. Or friends would even call to see how I’m doing. I don’t think they know what to say, so they don’t really call.”

Reconnecting, Redeploying. Bannerman and her husband rebuilt their marriage after nearly a year apart. “Neither of us was in a space where we could make ourselves vulnerable to the other,” she says. “That was critical.” As was letting go of what was “so I could make room for what is – realizing, accepting that our lives had changed irrevocably,

“I just wish someone
would come mow the lawn
once in a while.”

Enduring multiple deployments, family weighs pros and cons

Josh Buck read his daughter a bedtime story on the eve of his second deployment. He tucked her in and gave her the news. "Daddy has to go back to work tomorrow," he said.

Little Reagan leapt up and closed the bedroom door. "No," she told her father. "You stay here."

That moment last August illustrates the conundrum the Bucks and other families face when they weigh whether or not to stick with the multiple deployments that now define a military career, or get out and try for a more stable life, albeit in a sour economy.

"I think this deployment is harder," says Josh's wife, Deanna. "He is missing her 2-to-3 year. And we are at the potty-training age. So I don't get a break."

Josh missed his daughter learning to count to 10, speak in sentences and ride a tricycle. Moreover, the family worried Reagan wouldn't take to her father when he came home on R&R in late March. She did, Deanna says. "She was so sad for the longest time after he left again."

Now, even before he's returned home from his second deployment, Josh has learned he is already scheduled for a third combat tour in August 2011. That's if he stays in the Army. "If he goes, it means he will miss her 4-to-5 year, and she will be starting school," Deanna says. "Do we want to one day know what it's like to live a real life?"

The Bucks, who were high-school sweethearts, did not expect to find themselves questioning an Army career. He is a combat medic whose sister married one of the men he served with in the 82nd Airborne Division. Deanna's brother is an Army Ranger.

Josh's first deployment lasted 15 months. He made it home on R&R four days before Reagan was born. When his tour was finished, his daughter was already 7 months old.

"Kids change everything," Deanna says. "It's really, really hard for me because I get to the point I count down the days and the weeks. I feel like my life is on pause, waiting for somebody to hit play."

Deanna is surprised to find she doesn't get support from the places she expects it. Some other Army wives criticized

her after she posted a note on Facebook about how sad she was that Josh had returned to Afghanistan. "They said they 'hate all of these Army wives who whine – it's only a deployment.' That's easy to say if your husband is stateside. I'm sorry – I love my husband a lot. I don't want to send him off to war."

The family's personal security is a great concern while Josh is deployed. "I felt some real serious anxiety when he went back to Afghanistan. I have an alarm system. I have a dog. I have guns. (And) I have this horrible thing where I can't sleep when he's gone. When he's home, it's like a great weight is lifted off me."

There's also the grind of keeping up a house. The air conditioner broke in April, just as spring temperatures headed for the 90s. Deanna waited more than a week for a repairman to check it out, only to learn it would take another week to get the parts necessary to get it running again. Deanna loaded her 2-year-old in the car and drove 250 miles to her brother's house in Savannah, Ga. The garage door broke the morning she planned to leave.

"Everything always goes to crap when the husband is gone," she says.

The couple thought Josh would have at least two years at home after his current deployment ends this fall, one reason they bought a new house. If they don't leave the Army, the Bucks not only face the prospect of spending every other year apart, but also of moving to different posts every two to three years, or even overseas. Reagan would never stay in the same school for long. If they leave the Army and sell their house to move

home to Texas, they will have to repay the \$8,000 first-time-homebuyer's tax credit. They also worry about Josh's ability to find a job, given the recession.

"I hate how everybody thinks that you can't survive in the civilian world," Deanna says of pressure she feels from the Army to stay. "My parents do it. Lots of people do it."

Deanna also knows Josh feels he needs to do more for his country. "He told me if he does get out, he will always feel like he needs to be there until the war is over."

Although she says she would never tell him to quit, if it were up to her, they would put the Army life behind them: "Eight years is enough to sacrifice."



Josh and Deanna Buck's daughter, Reagan, holds a Hug-A-Hero Daddy Doll, made to comfort children of deployed servicemembers.

and we were never going back to what had been.” Her husband deployed again in 2008, and Bannerman soon was overwhelmed. She started having intense anxiety and panic attacks. “There were days I’d be working out in the gym, and I was just sobbing,” she says.

Counseling and medication helped her get past the bottom. She’s since turned to rafting, kayaking, working with horses and other therapeutic pursuits. “I had to create ways to survive,” Bannerman says. “Talk therapy and medications aren’t enough. We’ve literally got to work this stuff out of our bodies and re-engage life.”

Lynch and one of her sons connected with counseling services through the local Guard armory. She feels fortunate to have such a resource nearby, knowing that many Guard families are up to 75 miles from the armory.

Lynch still anticipated rough spots as she prepared for her husband’s return this summer. “You think, ‘Wow, I don’t know that person,’ she says. “And you have to look for depression and mood changes.” Her sons will act out more after their father comes home, she adds. “That’s how they cope with their feelings.”

Her youngest son, now 8, will have to adjust to living in the same house as his father. “The other week, he said, ‘Mommy, did Daddy ever live here?’ For me, the kids not remembering what it’s like to have (their dad) around is one of the hardest things.”

Five years ago, Guard and reserve families wondered how they were going to get through one unexpected deployment. Today, they are worried about repeated combat tours, the stress

Shorter deployments make Air Force life more bearable

Leaving the Air Force just before a promotion to captain “was one of the hardest decisions I ever made,” Lisa Ferguson says. “I loved my job. When I quit working, I felt like I gave up being Lisa (and) now I do everything as Mommy and Mrs. Ferguson.”

It’s easy to understand her choice, beyond the pull of motherhood. The Air Force was preparing to ship her to Iraq and likely would have cut her from the ranks once she returned home because it had too many captains. Her tour in Iraq would have overlapped with her husband’s deployments – Nathan is an Air Force flight nurse, and their 1½-year-old daughter, Ava, would have gone to live with a grandparent or an aunt.

“I didn’t want a six-month deployment every year,” Lisa says. “I didn’t want to wonder if I was going to have a job next month. I didn’t feel like I could be the mom I wanted to be and the public-affairs officer I wanted to be.”

Juggling motherhood, her Air Force career and her family’s military life was difficult from the beginning. Lisa had to fly from Mississippi to Texas to give birth because Hurricane Katrina threatened Keesler Air Force Base, where she and her husband were stationed. Her husband’s best friend was killed in Iraq the day the hurricane made landfall. The Fergusons then made the 14-hour drive back to Biloxi with a six-day-old infant.

Barely four months later, on Christmas Day, the family loaded the car and headed to the next assignment: Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina. Nathan began deployments and temporary assignments at other bases – TDYs, in military parlance. “There was only three months last year he was home the entire 30 days,” she says. Lisa asks Ava to help her mark the day Nathan is coming home on a calendar. Then, every evening before Ava goes to

bed, they cross off another day in anticipation of his homecoming.

Lisa credits the Air Force for keeping her husband’s deployments to four months. “But distance is still distance,” she says. “Ava doesn’t understand if it’s four months or a year. Daddy is still missing her Christmas recital at preschool or her ballet performance.” In fact, he’s missed two of the past three Christmases.

There are inevitable accidents: Ava’s broken collarbone and then a scalp wound that needed staples. In between deployments, they tried to conceive another child.

Some things only a father can do. “My daughter comes to me for comfort – to kiss her boo-boos and cuddle her when she is sick,” Lisa says. “Her dad roughhouses with her, plays kickball with her, rides bicycles with her. No other person – grandmother, aunt, uncle – can replace that time and attention from a parent. The connection, the quality of interaction, doesn’t exist anywhere else.”

Lisa doesn’t fault the military for her conundrum. “It’s your choice to have a child. It’s your choice to be in the military. You don’t go to the military recruiter thinking you are not going to deploy. What I didn’t know was how I would feel after I had a child.”

And she is quick to point out how much more difficult the homefront is for her sister, whose husband routinely sees 12- to 15-month deployments as an Army helicopter pilot. “I really believe every other service but the Army has figured out how to do shorter deployments and a little bit longer time at home,” Lisa says. “To me, that’s much bigger than setting up counseling services or free day care or a deployed-spouses dinner. People need to be home.”

As long as the United States is fighting wars in two countries, however, there’s likely no way to reduce

on children, their spouses' ability to keep jobs when employers know that hiring a member of the Guard or reserve means dealing with an employee who might be gone a great deal of time. They worry that the government won't take care of them as veterans.

Yet, they will keep serving.

Bannerman's husband has 20 years with the Guard and plans to continue. She no longer pushes him to get out. "He becomes, in many ways, the most of who he is in that uniform," she says. "As difficult as this has become, I love him, and I want to support his choice. It is the best way he knows to serve his country."

Gordon's husband plans to be in the Guard 30 years, so she knows that this unsettled rhythm is her reality. "Deployments are going to be part of my life," Gordon says. "You have to let

go of what you planned your future to be ... people have no idea that families serve, too."

Ironically, Lynch's husband left the Army more than 15 years ago and joined the National Guard so that he and his wife could enjoy a more normal life. "Little did we know how much time we would spend apart," she says.

She worries how much more time they will spend apart, not just because of the war, but because of all the other demands on the Guard: hurricane and flood relief, fighting forest fires, providing border security. She worries about the price families like hers will pay.

"Are you going to have the National Guard do the active-duty thing? Or are you going to have them patrol the border? Are you going to ask them to do both? That's a lot for a country to ask of part-timers." 🌿



Lisa Ferguson and her daughter, Ava, play a game together. Together, they cross off the days on the calendar until Ava's daddy, Nathan, comes home. Lisa doesn't like his four-month deployments, but others face far longer tours, she says.

deployments for any service branch. "I personally do not believe we should be involved in Iraq," Lisa says. "Iraq put the Army in a situation to have prolonged and repeated deployments. I do not believe our families in the military would be in the same situation if we were just involved in Afghanistan. I believe it's going to be like South Korea. I don't believe we'll ever get out of Iraq."

Lisa's husband transferred to Patrick Air Force Base in Florida this summer. That change in duty station means he

is now subject to six-month deployments. In two and half years, he will have served for 20 years, and they will face the question of staying in or leaving the Air Force. That raises questions about leaving before the work in Iraq and Afghanistan is done.

The answer is clear to Lisa.

"He's been away from family and friends for 20 years," Lisa says. "He'll have time to coach soccer and go to his children's school plays. I think he's ready for that."

'You don't have to be a soldier to be wounded'

For more than three years, Kristy Kaufmann has been one of the most prominent voices warning that too many of the nation's military families are quietly crumbling. The wife of a battalion commander who served in Iraq, she made her case at an invitation-only gathering between commanders, spouses and a four-star general. She delivered her message to a Cato Institute forum titled "Can the Pentagon Be Fixed?" She penned an op-ed for *The Washington Post* about the invisible casualties of the global war on terrorism – the families – quoting a spouse who summed it up this way: "You don't have to be a soldier to be wounded by these wars, but no one outside of (military families) seems to know this."

Today, despite thousands of positive responses, invitations from the White House, the creation of a Congressional Military Family Caucus and a plethora of new programs, conditions for military families continue to deteriorate, Kaufmann says.

"It hasn't been a lack of effort, at least in the last couple of years," she says. "It's a lack of effective effort. I think the top level of the Army has embraced it. There hasn't been much buy-in below that – not because post and unit leadership don't like families, but because they are under-resourced, undertrained and don't have sufficient incentive. I'm an optimist, and I believe in the system, but I am very, very frustrated. We still haven't shaken things up in a way that makes a significant difference for families."

Doing that, she contends, will require rewriting the laws and regulations that restrict groups like The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary from directly helping military family-readiness units. It will require permanent, dedicated social-work and mental-health staff at the unit level. It will require a military that holds commanders and noncommissioned officers accountable for how families are faring, and gives them the resources to support those families.

"This is not just a moral imperative, it is a national-security issue," Kaufmann says. "If you have a broken family, you will have a broken soldier, and since less than 1 percent of the population is fighting these wars, that poses a very real problem. And we're not even talking about the impact this will have on our country as a whole in the coming years."

A former gymnast at the University of California, Berkeley, Kaufmann met her husband, a West Point graduate, on an impulse trip to Las Vegas. Two years later, she sold her personal-training business and became a family-support group volunteer in Fort Sill, Okla. She continued that work when her husband transferred to Fort Bragg, N.C., getting what she calls "the ground's-eye" view of life for military families. She also became increasingly frustrated.

"I tried all of the right ways at Fort Bragg," she says. When that failed, she started making her case more publicly: writing the *Post* op-ed, speaking at The American Legion's national convention in 2009, and meeting with top Army officials.

Kaufmann praises those who have acted, including Defense Secretary Robert Gates, Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Pete Chiarelli, and Adm. Mike Mullen's wife, Deborah, who has spoken openly about the problem of suicides among military spouses. She credits the Army for family programs such as Strong Bonds, a relationship-building retreat.

The list of all that remains undone, however, is far too long, she says.

The primary tool for supporting the families of deployed soldiers, volunteer-operated family-readiness groups, "are the Army's only unfunded mandate," Kaufmann says.

The Army has recently responded by creating paid administrative-assistant positions for FRGs, a job whose pay fails to attract the social-work and mental-health professional skills that are desperately needed, she says.

"It's not that the programs aren't there on paper. The problem is in the implementation. Too often they don't work or families don't understand how to access or navigate them."

Kaufmann is now drafting a list of recommendations at Chiarelli's request. She's also struck by what this means about where things stand.

"While I'm honored to have been asked by the vice chief of staff to provide specific recommendations on how we can more holistically integrate family support throughout the Army, I think it's emblematic of the situation, that after nine years of war, this task – at least in part – has fallen to a volunteer," Kaufmann says. "Unless we harness everybody in this, we will lose a generation of our servicemembers and our families. I would think after our Vietnam experience, we're smart enough not to do that."



Army wife Kristy Kaufmann is now preparing recommendations for the Pentagon to improve the situation for military families. Tom Stratman

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From Blue Star to Gold

For military spouses and families, death changes everything.

Shellie Smith buried her husband near Clayton, N.C. Army 1st Lt. Justin Smith could have been laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery, but he always said sweet tea and Southern food were the best. “So I buried him in the South, near me and the boys,” says Shellie, whose husband was killed by a suicide car bomber in Iraq. “I like it where I can go have a picnic with him if I want to.”

That’s where the poetry ends for Shellie, one of thousands of women who have heard the knock on the door that plunged them into the world of widowhood, single parenting, the military bureaucracy they feel neither wants them nor knows how to deal with them, and a nation that too quickly forgets the surviving families. They find solace in each other, but old friendships fracture and fade.

“You realize this is as good as it gets,” Shellie says. “I almost think that’s the hardest.”

Shellie got word of her husband’s death the night of her oldest son’s birthday. She was exhausted, sleeping on the living-room couch after putting her youngest son, then an infant, down for the night. Unable to rouse her, the military detail went to the

apartment next door and woke Shellie’s grandmother, who was a week past heart surgery. Her grandmother made the men wait while she called the lieutenant’s parents. And then they were back, “banging at my door,” Shellie says.

She peeked out the window, saw a man in a military-style coat and said, “No way.” She checked his car to see if it had government license plates. She looked back at her porch and saw a second man with a Bible in his hand. She tried to remain calm. She opened the door, made eye contact, and asked for a minute. She called her parents twice, angry that they didn’t answer. She reached her aunt, who said, “I’m on my way.” She went back to the living room, suddenly aware of her mismatched T-shirt and pants, and covered herself with a blanket.

These are things you remember.

“How?” she asked, flatly.

“We think an IED.”

Shellie Smith, whose husband, Army 1st Lt. Justin Smith, was killed by a suicide car bombing in Iraq in 2005, visits his grave with their son, Ayden.

“Are you sure?”

Shellie held herself together until her aunt fetched her infant son and placed him in her lap. Seeing Justin’s features in his face brought tears.

“I was apologizing to them for crying,” Shellie says.

Her father arrived, also in tears, and asked, “Are you sure it’s the right Justin?”

The military detail left them brochures about grief.

Still in shock, Shellie sent 8-year-old Spensir to school the next morning without telling him. Her son from a previous marriage, Spensir considered Justin his father. He came home to a living room full of people and thought his mother had organized a surprise party for him. He went to the kitchen, surveyed his birthday cards, then looked at his mother and said, “My daddy’s dead, isn’t he? I told you he wouldn’t come back.”

“That was the worst,” Shellie says. “Telling my child.”

“A Feeling.” Shellie is surprised she even met Justin. She didn’t go to dance clubs, yet found herself at the High Five in downtown Raleigh, N.C., with a friend one night in August 2003, where she saw a tall, handsome man working magic on the dance floor. She couldn’t help but join him. “I’m a white Baptist girl,” she says, laughing. “We don’t dance. Our hips don’t move that way.”

By the end of the evening, Shellie had given Justin her telephone number – also out of character for her. “I had a feeling,” she says.

After Justin died, she ran into a man who had been with him at the club. “He said, ‘Are you that girl Justin met at the High Five that night?’ We all told him he was crazy. And he told us, ‘I have a feeling about that woman.’”

Headstrong and charming, Justin was earning his bachelor’s degree, and he owed the Army another eight years after he graduated. Shellie decided the military life was worth it. He returned to active duty a few months after they married,

and in October 2004, Ayden was born. Justin carried his son’s picture to the war zone the following spring and showed it to everyone. “He would walk up to the regimental commander and say, ‘Colonel, do you want to see something to make you smile?’ And he would show him Ayden’s picture,” Shellie says.

Three weeks before he was supposed to come home on R&R, Justin and his men were running a checkpoint on the outskirts of Baghdad. They stopped a car. Justin approached it, glanced inside and started to back away. The car exploded, killing Justin, his Iraqi interpreter and three other soldiers.

“He was 225 pounds, muscular, 6-foot tall,” Shellie says. “I can see him in full battle rattle, out there sweating in the heat, and the next thing he knows he’s standing in heaven saying, ‘Whoa, dude.’”

4,407	Number of U.S. military personnel killed in Iraq since 2001*
1,125	Number of U.S. military personnel killed in Afghanistan since 2001*
5,532	Total U.S. military killed since 2001 in the global war on terror*
* As of June 21, 2010	
33,192	Number of family members significantly affected by U.S. military deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan
3,042	Number of people who have lost a spouse
3,872	Number of children who have lost a parent
11,064	Number of parents who have lost a child
1,826	Number of stepparents who have lost a child
16,596	Number of grandparents who have lost a grandchild
4,370	Number of people estimated to have lost a brother or sister

Source: Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, www.taps.org

The Scarlet W. Fallen soldiers’ wives find their identities abruptly changed. They are no longer Ann, Casey or Shellie. Or Dan’s, Joshua’s or Justin’s wife. They are widows.

“There was this feeling that my only identity was being a widow,” says Ann Scheibner, whose husband was killed during his last combat mission in Iraq. “I couldn’t run into anybody where that isn’t what it was about.”

Casey Rodgers’ journey into this upside-down world began at her husband’s funeral when a well-wisher gave her a book about being a widow. “Why would you give somebody something with ‘widow’ on it at a funeral?” Casey says, pacing the living-room floor of her home near Sanford, N.C., where a high-ceilinged wall is covered with photos of her late husband and their family. “Treat me like you would if I was still Casey Rodgers with my husband.”

Joshua Rodgers died when the helicopter he was piloting was shot down in Afghanistan in May 2007. After the funeral, Casey quit receiving invitations from her social circle. She was dropped from friends' e-mail chains. People became uncomfortable when she mentioned her late husband's name. "You can't be a widow in front of other people," she says.

She was surprised to find her presence threatening to some married women. She quit wearing high heels to church. She learned to speak to the woman first when approached by a couple. The cheap suspicion is insulting. "Don't assume I want your husband just because I don't have one," she says. "Get to know me like you would get to know somebody else."

Casey finds even her relationship with the military awkward and strained, a surprising discovery she made when she went to greet her late husband's unit after its return from Afghanistan in early 2008. "I knew it was important to them to know I was still standing, because if families were destroyed by it, how were they going to be able to go back over there and do their job?" Casey says. Commanders avoided her and sent "a poor old captain over to ask how I was doing. Even the Army doesn't know how to deal with widows."

She avoids telling strangers she's a widow. "Everything stops, everything changes, when they find out," Casey says. "Half the time, they just up and walk away. If they think it's hard for them, what do they think it's like for me?"

This is called the "Scarlet W" in military circles, says journalist and Army wife Rebekah Sanderlin. "One of my friends tells me if she goes somewhere there's not a military base and tells somebody her husband was killed in Iraq, she's kind of a freak show," Sanderlin says.

Some military spouses are uncomfortable around widows. "They think it's some sort of jinx," Sanderlin says. "A lot of wives will not watch the news. If you're in the ignorance-is-bliss group and you're sitting across from a widow, you can't really deny it. I don't think they want to shun the widows, it's just the discomfort."

Families of the Fallen. People who work with

families of fallen soldiers say this awkwardness and alienation is common not only for widows but also for the parents and siblings of those killed in war.

"There is this initial crush where the family is often deluged with gifts of food and flowers," says Ami Neiberger-Miller, public-relations officer for the Transition Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS). "The funeral happens, and all of that goes away. People think, maybe we shouldn't invite this widow or that family to our Christmas party because they're still sad."

She still hasn't reconnected with the longtime friends she was vacationing with in 2007 when she learned her brother Chris – a soldier on his first deployment – had been killed by a roadside bomb in Baghdad.

People are also uncomfortable when widows and other survivors talk about the loved ones they've lost. "Unfortunately, society interprets us wanting to talk about our loved ones as, 'we haven't moved

on,' 'we're grieving too much,' 'we've been grieving too long' or 'we're grieving in the wrong way,'" Neiberger-Miller says. "They tell us we need to see a doctor."

Survivors, however, "don't think grief is a mental illness. We think grief is the price you pay for losing someone."

Families report mixed experiences with their casualty-assistance officers, and the military in general,

in the wake of a loved one's death. Part of the issue is the grueling process of doing all the military requires to make sure a servicemember's remains are properly laid to rest and benefits started.

"The widow is suddenly put in a position to make a lot of decisions that are pretty jarring at a point where she is least equipped to deal with them," says Neiberger-Miller, who contacted TAPS as she tried to deal with her brother's death and later went to work for the nonprofit survivor-advocacy group.

As for the reception widows receive from their husband's military unit, "it depends upon the training and support they have. I've seen commanders do a great job at reaching out."

One came to Arlington National Cemetery over Memorial Day to talk to a widow while Neiberger-Miller was there. Other units are less comfortable, and may not know how to react.

"The widow is suddenly put in a position to make a lot of decisions that are pretty jarring at a point where she is least equipped to deal with them."

Ami Neiberger-Miller

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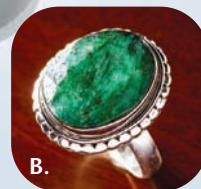
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"I think the leadership sets the tone," she says.

Through all of this, it's important to consider how circumstances may be different for military families. "Their loved one often died in a violent way. As a result, our families are all traumatic survivors."

Single Parenting. Handpainted silver letters on the front door of Shellie Smith's home say: "Family, Friends, Faith, Freedom."

Anger, bitterness, loneliness and incomprehension have also lived at this address. "I've been pretty pissed off about it," Shellie says. "The fact that his life was cut short makes me angry. The fact that his little boys don't have a dad makes me mad."

She must also help her children understand their loss. Her youngest son would say, "Let me just see him." And I said, 'He's in heaven.' And Ayden would say, 'So why can't I go to heaven and see him?'"

Ayden is now beginning to understand that his daddy is gone. Shellie worries about him starting school this fall with students whose fathers are there for soccer games and class performances. "I'm trying to explain what death means," Shellie says. "And why it's final."

Then there is the daunting task of raising children without a father. Spensir told Shellie he won't know how to use the grill because he doesn't have a daddy. And she doesn't have anyone to help her shoulder the load. "My little one was sick a lot with ear infections," Shellie says of her single-parenting struggles. "And it would be helpful to have a husband when you are puking."

Well-meaning people push her to start a new relationship, offering the pat advice that widows loathe: "You'll find somebody else." Or, "It's been four years – it's time for you to move on. You're still young – you'll meet someone else. There's still time for you to have more kids."

"Their heart's in the right place, but their mouth isn't," Shellie says. "Right now, people are asking why I'm not dating. I tell them, 'The line of men looking for widows with two boys is empty.' In reality, I have no energy for that."

Shellie and her widow friends have dissected the difficulties of dating. "Let's say the new guy comes along," Shellie says. "First he has to love me. Then he has to love children that aren't his. Then he has to deal with the fact that I still love my husband. And he will have to deal with the fact that my husband was a hero."

Instead, she is moving to a house across the road from her parents and grandparents so her father can teach the boys to hunt and fish, and "they can explore and rip and run, like boys love to do."

A Son's Journey. Ann Scheibner didn't have a chance to tell her 12-year-old son about his father's death. Tyler answered the door when the military detail came with the news. Dan was killed on his last combat mission, a patrol he volunteered to join to help the new platoon sergeant learn the dangerous terrain his unit patrolled in Iraq.

"With such an awful thing, my son came over and put his arms around me, and said, 'We're going to be OK, Mom,'" Ann says. "He was already taking on that role when his dad deployed."

Ann had spoken to Dan that morning. He was done with combat missions. He was excited about his transfer to a less dangerous job at headquarters after his unit took heavy casualties. At the last minute, however, he took an Iraqi interpreter's seat in the back of a Hummer and was the only one killed

by a roadside bomb that exploded as the patrol returned to base.

For Ann, the first week after her husband's death was particularly awful. Getting military IDs changed, signing paperwork, dealing with her casualty-assistance officer.

"There's a lot of things that were so wrong and done so poorly," says Ann, who had been helping the spouses of other soldiers in Dan's unit deal with their husbands' deaths just a month earlier. "A lot of times, I was telling my casualty-assistance officer things that needed to be done. In a lot of circumstances, I was trying to make him feel comfortable."

She also worries about the way the door was slammed on her son's grief. Tyler established a rapport with a child psychologist at Fort Lewis, Wash., and then arrived for an appointment

"Right now, people are asking why I'm not dating. I tell them, 'The line of men looking for widows with two boys is empty.' In reality, I have no energy for that."

Shellie Smith



Casey Rodgers lost her husband, Army Chief Warrant Officer Joshua Rodgers, when the helicopter he was piloting was shot down in Afghanistan in 2007. She plans to move back west with their three daughters, Autumn, Madison and Ashlyn, above.

one afternoon to find that the psychologist no longer worked there. The staff told Tyler he could start over with another counselor. He turned and told his mother they were leaving. “To this day, my son won’t talk to anybody” about his father’s death, Ann says.

“The kids are the ones who are forgotten,” Casey adds. “People say kids are resilient. Every day I worry about the girls. I have a widow friend whose 11-year-old is suicidal.”

Joshua was the kind of father who was out bouncing on the trampoline or splashing around a swimming pool with his daughters. His presence can’t be replaced. “He was just a big kid,” Casey says with a rare smile.

The Death Bureaucracy. If grief is not overwhelming enough, widows are awash in bureaucratic struggles from the moment they learn their spouse has been killed. Casey had to call for her senator’s help so she could accompany her husband’s body on a flight from Dover Air Force Base to his family’s home in Nevada after the military repeatedly rebuffed her request.

Ann said she had to fight for months to get the active-duty health-care benefits she was en-

titled to receive for three years after Dan’s death. She also learned she would only receive half of the military pension Dan could have drawn if he hadn’t gone to Iraq. That essential financial help is temporary. It expires when Tyler is 18 – or, if he goes to college, 21. Social Security stops when he is 16.

Most egregious, however, was Ann’s battle to have her husband cremated. Dan’s urn was engraved with the wrong date of death, and the government refused to change it because it matched his death certificate, which was also incorrect.

“It was terrible,” Ann says. “I was trying to go home to bury my husband. And it wasn’t my mistake. Every other piece of paper, every other award, his Purple Heart – all of them had a different date. If they had all been the same, I wouldn’t have liked it, but I would have been understanding.”

Ann finally called TAPS. The group got the date on the urn changed, but her frustration from the ordeal lingers. “That’s what spouses, who are overwhelmed, are battling with the military,” Ann says. “Our soldiers and our families deserve more than that.”

The personal hurdles are just as daunting. Shellie floundered for three years after Justin died, in part

because she lives an hour and a half north of Fort Bragg, N.C., and the nearest community of military widows. “I didn’t know anybody else like me,” she says.

That changed 18 months ago, when Shellie met Casey and another widow at an event for children of fallen soldiers. She’s discovered a bond like no other. “When another widow says she understands, I know she means that,” Shellie says. “Widows have credentials. They have gotten the same knock. They have cried the same tears.”

Widows share fears and feelings, and form a close-knit surrogate family that will drop everything to drive 100 miles at midnight to be with another widow whose child needs emergency surgery – as was the case when Shellie’s son was injured in an accident last spring.

Like widows, children are more comfortable around other children who have lost their parents, Shellie says. “I’ve heard my kids say to other kids, ‘Is your daddy in heaven? My daddy’s in heaven too.’”

Ann lost that connection after she moved back to Michigan two years ago so her son could be close to her late husband’s family. “I felt like it was the best place for him to be grounded,” she says. Still, it’s a struggle for her after having the support of military communities for 17 years. “Some of the loss is moving away from it all.”

That’s the dilemma facing Casey as she prepares to move her daughters back west. Last summer, she realized that Madison, Autumn and Ashlyn were happier in Nevada, when they visited Carson City, where she and Joshua became high-school sweethearts.

“I have a support system here,” Casey says, referring to her widow friends in the Fayetteville area. “But when my kids went home last summer, they just lit up.”

Now she’s preparing to make her way in a civilian community that has largely forgotten the wars.

Remember and Respect. That disconnect is especially harsh when it comes to a soldier’s death. A week after Justin died, Shellie went shopping for a dress to wear to his funeral. She overheard two

men in a mall food court having a loud antiwar discussion. She ran out of patience, walked over, and pulled out Justin’s dog tags and wedding ring, which on a chain around her neck.

“I told them, ‘My husband gave his life seven days ago so you could sit in this food court and express your opinion as loudly as you want to and as freely as you want to, without thinking twice. I want you to remember why.’”

Remember. Respect. At the heart of it all, that’s the widows’ simple request.

Shellie has since run into similar situations – strangers

asking questions until they find out she is a military widow. Then they quiz her about her feelings on the war and the president.

“I tell them, ‘His death was personal. His death was not political,’” Shellie says. “Whether you believe in the war or not, whether you support it or not, it’s happening. The people involved in fighting the war are real, and the families are real. My children are without a daddy – and I live without a husband – so they can live and do and say whatever they want without any fear.” 🌿

Ken Olsen is a frequent contributor to The American Legion Magazine.

Amy C. Elliott is a photographer and documentary filmmaker from New York.



Shellie Smith holds her husband’s dog tags and wedding ring, which often hang from a chain around her neck.

Legion programs of family support

TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

www.legion.org/financialassistance
(317) 630-1323

Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) provides cash grants from The American Legion's Endowment Fund Corporation to ensure that minor children of injured or deceased Legion-eligible veterans can stay at home with their families, rather than go to institutions. When the family has exhausted all other resources, a post can apply for cash assistance on the family's behalf, which can be used for food, shelter, utilities, health care and other expenses.

OPERATION: MILITARY KIDS

www.operationmilitarykids.org

Operation: Military Kids (OMK) is a collaborative program between the U.S. Army and local communities to support children and youth affected by deployment. A network of partners on every level, including the Legion, maintains a variety of opportunities for these children – recreational camps where they can meet other children like them, mobile-technology labs where they can create messages for loved ones overseas, and programs with local 4-H and Boys and Girls Clubs. The Legion's National Executive Committee passed a resolution in 2005 urging posts and departments to work with OMK in their communities.

FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK

www.legion.org/familysupport
(800) 504-4098

Due to multiple, prolonged deployments, National Guard and reserve families often find themselves short of money and help around the house. The Legion's Family Support Network relays requests for assistance to departments, then posts, which contact the families in need. Legionnaires then provide anything from lawn care to house repairs to child care for families in their communities.

BLUE STAR BANNER & BLUE STAR SALUTE

www.legion.org/troops

To order a Blue Star Banner:

(888) 453-4466

For more information: (317) 630-1253

The Blue Star Banner, hung in a window to signify that a loved one is serving in the military during wartime, has been around since 1917. The Legion resurrected the banner after Sept. 11, 2001, providing them for military families across the nation. The Legion also offers corporate flags for businesses and other organizations. They now hang in neighborhoods and board rooms alike throughout the United States.

Blue Star Salutes are conducted at various locations across the country. These free events, open to the public, recognize and honor military families. Salutes feature activities, celebrities, performances and speeches by government and military leaders. They also include ceremonies of remembrance for those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

OPERATION COMFORT WARRIORS

www.legion.org/troops/operationcomfort

Operation Comfort Warriors has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars in recent years to provide items of comfort and help to wounded warriors and their families alike. Items such as iPods, books, phone cards, ping-pong tables and computers keep them entertained during their recovery, while kiosk-based information systems help warriors and their families take full advantage of opportunities, therapy appointments and more.

HEROES TO HOMETOWNS

www.legion.org/heroes

(202) 263-5761 (Catherine Trombley)

Heroes to Hometowns (H2H) provides transition, support and coordination services to severely injured troops returning home. This Legion program establishes a network of help for

young veterans, assisting them in everything from financial planning to housing assistance to home and vehicle adaptation, as well as providing family support and a rousing welcome home. Severely injured servicemembers and their families can fill out an assistance-request form online for H2H help.

LEGAL AND CLAIMS ASSISTANCE

The American Legion offers numerous free assistance options to help veterans learn how to apply for benefits they've earned. Services include:

- Free representation throughout the process with the Disability Evaluation System-Physical Evaluation Board (MEB/PEB) at Walter Reed Army Medical Center (202) 356-1012, ext. 40810, Brooke Military Medical Center, and Fort Lewis, Wash.
- Free representation by trained Legion service officers when applying for benefits, (202) 861-2700 (Veterans Claims Assistance)
- Free assistance on applying for GI Bill benefits (202) 263-5773
- Employment assistance and information on job fairs around the country (202) 263-2995

OPERATION MILITARY FAMILY OUTREACH

All resources offered by The American Legion are showcased in Operation Military Family Outreach, which connects the U.S. Armed Forces and local communities. Individual posts reach out to military units and armories to explain all that the Legion does for military families, regardless of their proximity to a base or installation. DVDs are available to Legionnaires to accompany presentations. More information is available online.

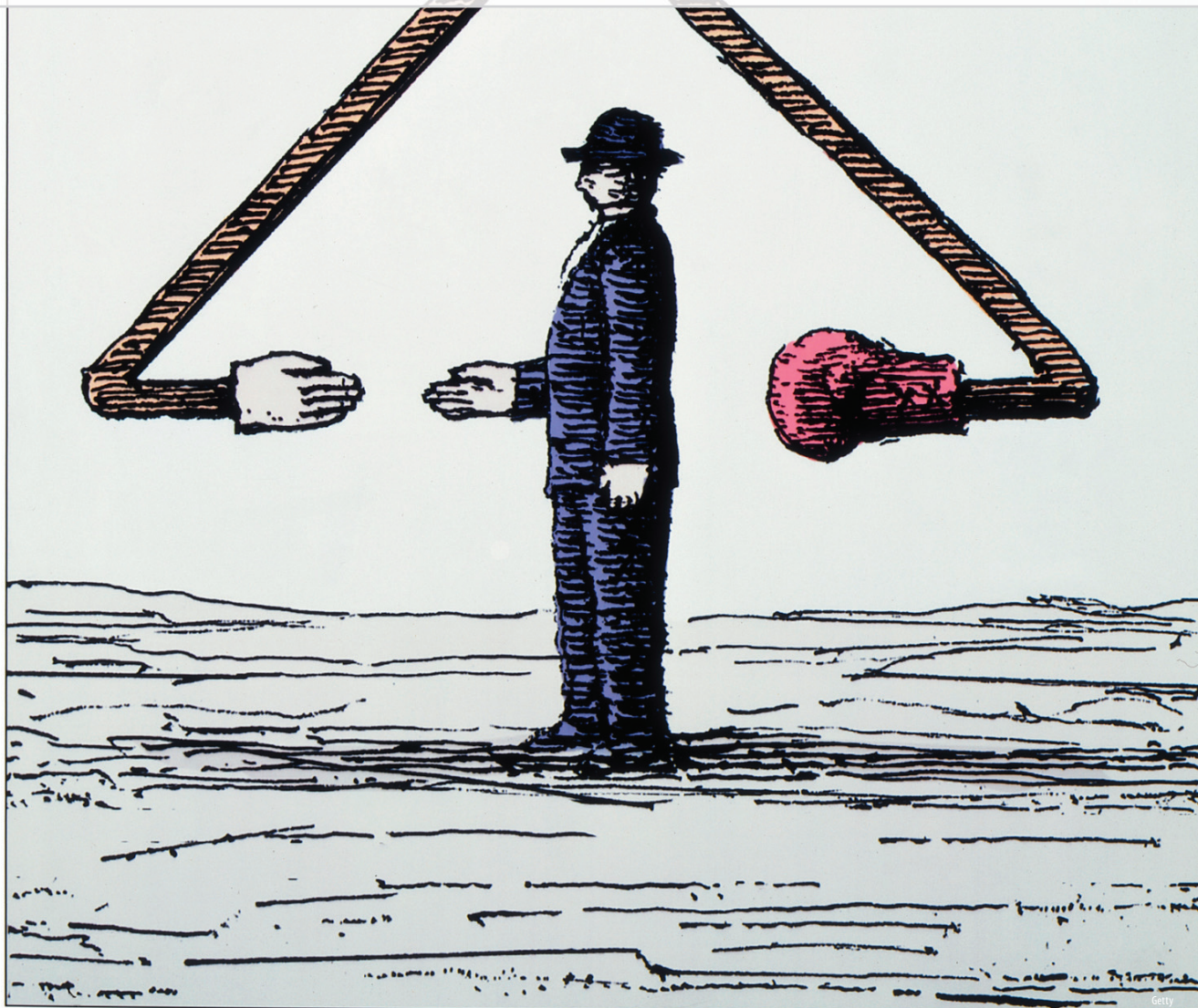
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Search "Operation Military Family Outreach"

Marriages of Convenience

Throughout U.S. history, the enemy of our enemy has not always been our friend.

BY ALAN W. DOWD



Wanting a fresh start and a partner free from the taint of corruption, President Barack Obama was quietly pulling for Hamid Karzai's opponents in last year's Afghan elections. "Karzai is not our man," as one administration official put it.

The feeling seems mutual, as Karzai misses the close personal relationship he enjoyed with the Bush administration. But Obama and Karzai have found a way to live with each other, recognizing that they share a common enemy: the Taliban.

In short, Obama is learning that working with the Karzais of the world is preferable to the alternative – fighting against them, or without them.

This practice of making common cause with flawed partners predates the post-9/11 campaign against terror. In fact, the United States entered into these uncomfortable marriages of convenience even before the birth of the republic.

British Back-and-Forth. Lt. Col. George Washington and American colonists fought alongside the British against the French during the French and Indian War – and then alongside the French against the British in the Revolutionary War.

Indeed, just over a decade after the colonists helped the British defeat the French, those same colonists were negotiating with the French to secure loans, military supplies, naval support and direct military intervention, which the French ultimately provided. France was willing to help because America's ragtag revolutionaries were the enemies of France's enemy.

Decades later, the United States got a lot of help from Britain in securing the Western Hemisphere against European intervention because British and American interests once again converged. When it appeared that an alliance of European empires would try to reassert control over newly independent countries in South America, as John Lewis Gaddis reminds us in "Surprise, Security and the American Experience," the British "suggested a joint Anglo-American statement ruling out future European colonization in the Western Hemisphere." The Monroe administration then turned "the British proposal into a unilateral pronouncement" – the Monroe Doctrine – calculating that the British navy would, in effect, enforce U.S. policy because both countries wanted to block European intervention in South America.

But the period of Anglo-American detente was temporary. By the 1890s, the Cleveland administration was threatening to go to war with Britain over

boundary lines in Venezuela. President Theodore Roosevelt, as historian Edmund Morris details in his twin biographies, openly contemplated a "war with Great Britain for the conquest of Canada." During the Venezuelan Crisis of 1902-1903, the United States was on the verge of a naval war with Britain and Germany. And in the decade that followed, it was in a global arms race with, among others, Britain.

In fact, as late as 1942, as Niall Ferguson observes in "Colossus," opinion polls revealed that 60 percent of Americans still regarded the British as "colonial oppressors."

"Uncle Joe" and Osama bin Laden. Public opinion notwithstanding, Winston Churchill's Britain was much more than the enemy of our enemy during World War II. It was a true friend. The Anglo-American alliance was reflected in, and cemented by, the Atlantic Charter, a statement of shared values that would bind the two liberal democracies and guide their conduct of war and peace.

In a sign of their shared vision, when Roosevelt and Churchill rendezvoused in the North Atlantic to sign the charter in August 1941, they led their troops in singing "Onward, Christian Soldiers!"

It's impossible to imagine Stalin joining such a chorus. Stalin's USSR was not America's friend, but the quintessential enemy of our enemy. Gaddis points out that 60 Soviets died for every one American, noting how Roosevelt aligned "America's interests with the Red Army's capabilities."

Even so, Stalin was not "Uncle Joe." He was a brutal totalitarian dictator on par with Hitler. He did not share the United States' values, only its objectives – namely, the defeat of another brutal totalitarian dictator. And so it was unwise, short-sighted and counterproductive to our postwar interests to confuse the situation by humanizing him or equating him with a close ally. We paid for this naïveté in the early years of the Cold War.

In short, the enemy of our enemy is not necessarily our friend.

Grasping that, and working with the enemies of our enemies to achieve concrete foreign-policy ends, is a challenge for an idealistic nation like ours. The American people are not particularly comfortable with realpolitik or the cold, calculating actions it demands. Yet throughout the Cold War, Washington employed a sometimes ruthless and often effective brand of realpolitik. As Robert Kaplan has observed, "Americans champion idealism while employing realists perhaps because we need to have a high opinion of ourselves while

pursuing our own interests.” He cites Kissinger, Acheson, Marshall and Stimson – “realists all.”

In his history of the Cold War, Derek Leebaert reminds us that after World War II Washington quietly imported hundreds of German rocket scientists, “who would otherwise be ... arrested for war crimes.” This special class of immigrants would be crucial to the nation’s security in an era shaped by jets, missiles and rockets.

More broadly, after forging an alliance with the Soviet Union to wage and win a world war against Germany and Japan, the United States forged alliances with Germany and Japan to wage and win a cold war against the Soviet Union.

Much later, when Iran and Iraq went to war – a fundamentalist theocracy that had humiliated the United States, and a Soviet client state that had trampled every notion of human rights – Washington recognized that two of its enemies were fighting and made the most of it. “In a feat of realpolitik that eclipsed even Kissinger’s in the 1970s,” Ferguson writes, “the United States ended up giving assistance to both sides.”

Waging the Cold War – pursuing the greater good of containing Soviet communism – sometimes meant making common cause with unsavory regimes. We were the good guys, to be sure, but we worked with our share of bad guys. Just consider some of our thuggish friends who ruled South Vietnam, the Philippines, South Korea, Chile, Nicaragua, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The list goes on, and Americans sometimes paid for these moral mismatches. When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, for instance, the United States armed and funded mujahedeen fighters, who bled the Red Army white. One of those who fought on America’s side in that climactic Cold War battle was Osama bin Laden, who received CIA training. The man who would go on to plan and perpetrate the bloodiest foreign attack on U.S. soil understood well that a temporary partnership should never be mistaken for friendship.

Phony Wars, Phony Friends. In the war on terror, the United States continues to embrace the “enemy of my enemy” maxim, often choosing the lesser of two evils. For example, before Karzai became Afghanistan’s president, the United States partnered with a ragtag collection of Afghan tribes and clans eager to remove the Taliban and expel its al-Qaeda partners. But in the ebb and flow of the war, some chiefs have been exposed as duplicitous, corrupt or linked to opium production. Others simply quit fighting when it doesn’t suit them.

Frustrated by Karzai’s failure to rein in corruption, the Obama administration has pressured Karzai to make reforms. Karzai has resisted and even mused that he might “join the Taliban” if Washington pushes too hard, which would actually make him the friend of our enemy.

Pakistan was once exactly that. It effectively spawned the Taliban in 1994-1995 in a shortsighted attempt to stabilize neighboring Afghanistan. After 9/11, Pakistan’s Pervez Musharraf – with Washington holding the equivalent of a loaded gun to his head – promised to help remove the Taliban and fight al-Qaeda. And for those promises he benefited richly in aid and arms. Yet his words proved empty, and he waged what amounted to a phony war, ceding vast stretches of territory to America’s enemies, then claiming his government was too weak to control its territory, before finally invoking Pakistan’s sovereignty to block the United States from doing what he was unwilling to do.

In the war on terrorism, the United States continues to embrace the “enemy of my enemy” maxim, often choosing the lesser of two evils.

The good news is that the post-Musharraf government seems genuinely committed to doing its part – and working with the United States rather than against it.

Speaking of working with the United States, the human-rights and democratic credentials of some of our Central Asian partners leave much to be desired. Witness the upheaval in Kyrgyzstan, where government repression triggered an opposition coup. Even so, the “Stans” are vital transit hubs for the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In the same way, the Yemeni government may be helpful in fighting al-Qaeda – for now. However, none of these countries are true friends of the United States. They are simply temporary partners, means to a greater end.

When these marriages of convenience sour, backfire or simply no longer serve America’s larger interests, we need to have the nerve to cut our ties and find other partners, while preserving strong bonds with that small handful of nations that share both our interests and our values. 🌿

Alan W. Dowd is a contributing editor for *The American Legion Magazine*.

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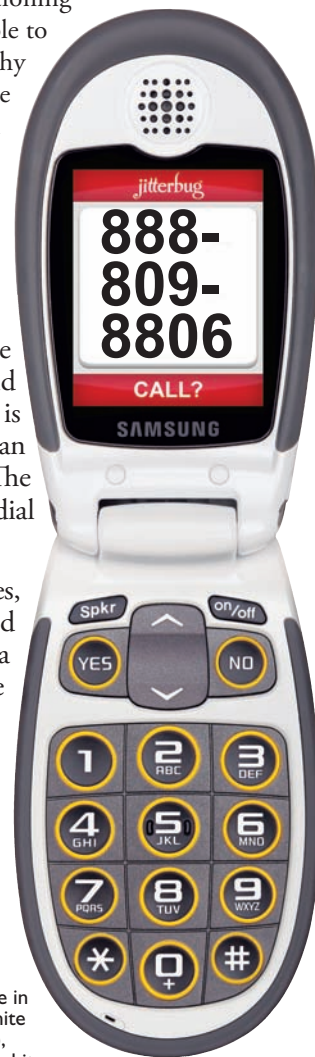
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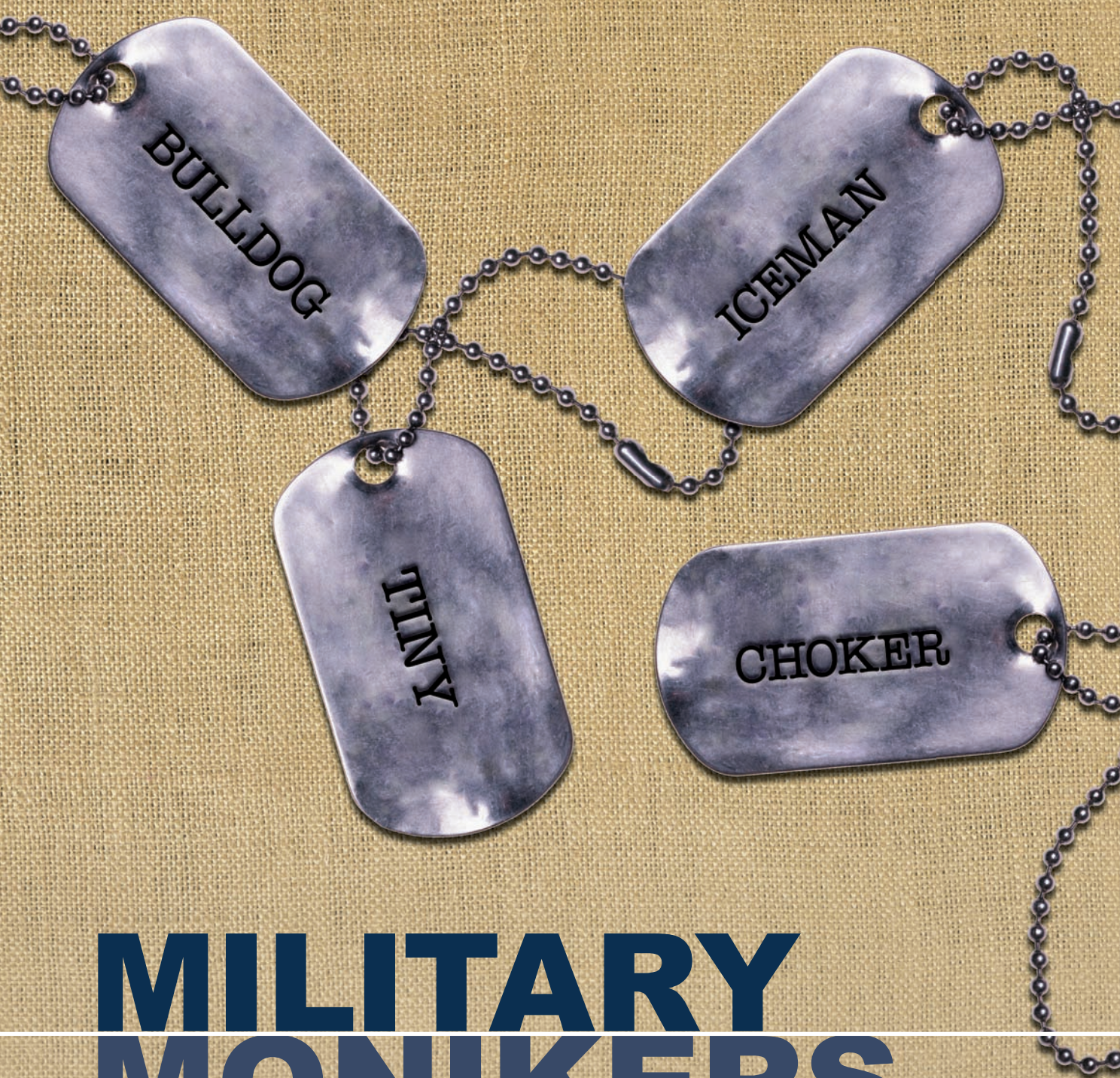
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MILITARY MONIKERS

In a world of uniformity and discipline, a nickname can ease the stress, break the tedium and, of course, stick with you for life.

BY HARVEY MEYER

nickname (nik'nām')

a familiar or humorous name given to person or thing instead of or as well as the real name

With his bull neck, bulging muscles and steely eyes, the chief petty officer cast an intimidating shadow over Rod Kesanen and the other Navy recruits. They stood ramrod straight by their racks as he addressed them. "My name is 'Choker' Carter!" he bellowed. "And do you know why they call me by that name?" He looked at the recruit leader standing just inches away.

Quick as a cat, Carter grabbed the recruit leader by the neck and tossed him onto a nearby bunk. For the next 10 or so seconds, Carter pinned the man down while half-choking him. "That," he said, staring again at the recruits, "is why they call me 'Choker' Carter."

The message was clear to the startled recruits: shape up, pronto. That meant wrinkle-free blankets, tidy shelves, a spotless compartment. Otherwise, risk the wrath of "Choker" Carter. Recalling that summer day in 1969, Kesanen can't help but laugh. He never did learn Carter's real first name. No matter. The nickname left an indelible impression on him.

"When you look back on the incident, it's comical," says Kesanen, now a building contractor in Blaine, Minn. "But at the time, there was nothing funny about it."

Nicknames have long been part of military lore. Evidence suggests soldiers have given pet names to their buddies or themselves since the Civil War or earlier. Some sobriquets applied to entire groups: doughboys, grunts, jarheads.

Cleveland Evans, former president of the American Name Society, says nicknames often arise when people are in close proximity for extended periods.

"In the military, you're often working and living with someone 24 hours a day. The more you know someone, the more you're familiar with their quirks and foibles." These are key ingredients for a good nickname.

Frank Nuessel, a University of Louisville professor and author of "The Study of Names," says nicknames can serve as a counterpoint to the impersonal, dogtag touch of military discipline – name, rank and serial number.

"Nicknames can help develop camaraderie, teamwork and bonding, where people are looking out for their buddies," says Nuessel, editor of *Names: A Journal of Onomastics* (the study of proper names). "Conversely, negative nicknames could label or ridicule someone," psychologically scarring folks for years.

Derogatory, humorous, descriptive or just plain strange, military nicknames come in all varieties. Behind almost every one is a story. Here are a few:

"TRAMP"

Chuck Dare was head-over-heels in love. Or so he thought in 1971. The object of affection was his girlfriend from Lincoln Park, Mich.

He was so goo-goo-eyed that his Army buddies at Fort Knox, Ky., started calling him "Tramp," as in the male half of Disney's "Lady and the Tramp," an animated movie starring two lovey-dovey dogs. "I kind of acted like that smitten dog for a while," Dare recalls. "They started kidding me and calling me 'Tramp,' and that's when I really turned up the 'Lady' references. I would say, 'I've got to go call my 'lady' or write my 'lady' a letter.'"

Dare, from Gainesville, Texas, is commander of American Legion Post 42 and a co-founder of American Legion Riders. "Tramp" Dare ended up breaking up with "Lady" while he was stationed in South Korea. But the nickname survives today. Hundreds know him only as "Tramp," a nickname he grew into, he says.

"I started running around and drinking beer and chasing women," he quips.

"BAGGER"

Carl "Bagger" Nelson, 91, received his military moniker in 1942. One of his World War II buddies still calls him by that nickname.

It all started when he was drafted by the Army and



ended up in the First Infantry Division – the “Big Red One” – composed mostly of soldiers from Brooklyn, N.Y. Nelson hailed from Richmond, Va.

“I had a buck sergeant who used to tease me that I talked differently than the guys from Brooklyn,” says Nelson, who now lives in Chalfont, Pa. “He said, ‘But you don’t sound like those guys from the Deep South who have a real strong Southern drawl. I think maybe you’re a carpetbagger.’”

During the Civil War, Southerners were known to dub those Yankees who headed south to profit from the conflict “carpetbaggers.” In Nelson’s case, the multisyllabic nickname was too cumbersome, so it was quickly shortened to “Bagger.”

“I took the nickname in good fun,” says Nelson, a D-Day veteran who received the Purple Heart for wounds he received in France. “I was constantly teased, but it was a happy time with those guys.”

Back in the United States, Nelson and his wife mail out dozens of Christmas cards to his Army buddies every year. He’ll address himself as “Bagger” Nelson on the front envelope, a reminder of a special kinship from days gone by.

“There is an informality when someone calls you by a nickname,” Nelson says. “There’s also exclusivity. Not many men on this planet know me as ‘Bagger.’”



“GRANDMA”

In his mid-20s, the lanky Bryan Reinholdt didn’t look anything like a grandmother while serving in Iraq in 2005. Yet

the Army Reserve sergeant, who worked as a parts distributor for Apache helicopters, called himself “Grandma,” and the nickname stuck. He even had a tag sewn on his lightweight flight suit.

Why? “Most everyone enjoys what comes from Grandma’s kitchen,” explains Reinholdt, a Louisville, Ky., resident and Legionnaire. “I was merely ‘cooking up’ something good for everyone by supplying them with the parts they needed.”

At first, those seeking parts were mystified by the “Grandma” flight tag. And by the flight suit, normally reserved for pilots or officers. However, they appreciated Reinholdt’s attempt at humor, a homage to his beloved grandmother, Patricia, who died in 2008.

“Once people got close enough to read my flight tag, they could see I wasn’t an officer,” Reinholdt says. “Then when ‘Grandma’ registered with them,

they would unfailingly laugh, although it was probably more of a confused laugh.

“Nicknames help lighten things up and take away from the doldrums of being deployed. Joking around also makes the time go by faster. And when you’re spending that much time together, it helps you avoid getting on each other’s nerves.”

“MAGILLA GORILLA”

To this day, Gary White is astonished by the supersized strength of a Navy boatswain’s mate known as “Magilla Gorilla.” A petty officer third class in 1968, White was a shipmate of “Magilla” on a guided missile frigate that roamed the Gulf of Tonkin during the Vietnam War.

“Magilla” was tagged with the nickname because he reminded shipmates of the popular 1960s TV cartoon character. A veteran of hard-labor logging camps, the so-called deck ape with the pronounced forehead and jaw was a 200-pound mass of muscle.

“If he hit you on the arm in everyday horseplay among friends, you never forgot it,” White says.

White, who lives in Houston, once saw “Magilla” grab a rope that was tethered to four 5-gallon cans of paint from a storage area five decks below. He not only hoisted the 180 pounds of paint using a hand-over-hand technique, but also a 120-pound man standing atop the cans. When the load reached the main deck, “Magilla” calmly lifted the man from the opening with his left hand while maintaining a grip on the cans with his right.

“It was like watching a silverback gorilla pull a tree out of the ground,” White marvels.

The hard-working “Magilla” was good-humored, even-tempered and rarely challenged. Even after a late night of liberty, he kept his strength in check.

“If you really got him angry, he knew he could probably break you in half,” White says. “So he’d just walk away.”



Harvey Meyer is a freelance writer in St. Louis Park, Minn. He contributes to general-interest, consumer, business and higher-education magazines.

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Royal C. Johnson

Congressman enlisted after voting against war.

On April 6, 1917, the House of Representatives voted 373 to 50 in favor of declaring war on Germany. Unpersuaded by President Woodrow Wilson's call to arms, Royal Cleaves Johnson, South Dakota's freshman congressman, was in the minority, but his convictions and bravery soon led him from Capitol Hill to the battlefields of Europe, to fight in the very war he voted against. Johnson came home a combat hero and veterans advocate.

His turnabout came when he concluded that it was unfair to oppose the war but to then vote for appropriations "sending other women's sons into war." So in early 1918, Johnson ignored his exemption from military service, left the House to enlist in the Army and was severely wounded during a battle in France.

Johnson's initial stance on the war no longer mattered. The people of South Dakota re-elected him by a wide margin in 1918, and he wasn't even in the States. Instead, he was in a hospital overseas, recovering from injuries caused by an exploding shell at Montfaucon. For accompanying two fellow soldiers to the rear and refusing space in an ambulance until they received care, he received the Distinguished Service Cross and the Croix de Guerre.

When Johnson finally returned to the House seat he first won in 1915, he put veterans issues at the top of his agenda. He strongly supported the creation of The American Legion, so much that he authored the bill that incorporated the organization.

Johnson moved up the ladder as he and his fellow Republicans held the majority. He served as chairman of the Committee on Expenditures in the Department of War from 1921 to 1925, and of the Committee on World War Veterans' Legislation from 1929 to 1932.

Upon his retirement from Congress in 1933, Johnson practiced law in Washington until his death in 1939.

Legionnaires never forgot his service to veterans and to their organization. In 1953, Tom Miller, who served with Johnson in World War I and was vice chairman of the Paris Caucus in March 1919, awarded the Distinguished Service Medal to Johnson posthumously.

Accepting the Legion's highest honor on his father's behalf, Navy Capt. Harlan T. Johnson remarked, "Dad was very proud of what he was able to accomplish, both for national defense and particularly for the veterans who suffered in the war, the maimed and the injured. He was very proud of his association with the Legion. The Legion supported him, and he supported the Legion."

— Paul Fedorchak



The dossier

Born in Cherokee, Iowa, on Oct. 3, 1882, and grew up in Highmore, S.D.

Graduated from the University of South Dakota's law department.

Entered public life as an assistant state's attorney after passing the bar in 1906. Served as South Dakota's attorney general from 1910 to 1914.

Enlisted at 36, and served in the 313th Regiment, "Baltimore's Own," as a private, sergeant, second lieutenant and first lieutenant.

Earned the Distinguished Service Cross from the United States and the Croix de Guerre from France, for refusing an ambulance ride until his comrades were treated.

Married Florence Thode Johnson.

Served 18 years in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1915-1933.

Died Aug. 2, 1939, in Washington, and buried at Arlington National Cemetery.



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Tying a 'Yellow Ribbon' around the world

With one song, Tony Orlando delivered a message of hope that has become a global anthem.

BY PHILIP M. CALLAGHAN



Getty

The first time Tony Orlando & Dawn performed "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree," they sang it in front of 70,000 people at the Cotton Bowl on New Year's Day 1973. Texas went on to beat Alabama 17-13, and "Yellow Ribbon" went on to sell 7 million copies worldwide, topping the pop charts in the United States and the United Kingdom.

On that particular day, Texans were honoring a group of servicemen who had been POWs in Vietnam, Cambodia or Laos, including future Arizona senator and presidential candidate John McCain.

Orlando spoke with *The American Legion Magazine* about that first performance, how "Yellow Ribbon" became an anthem of hope, and how he continues to honor U.S. troops and veterans.

Q: Take us back to that day on Jan. 1, 1973, when you first performed "Yellow Ribbon."

A: Little did I know how much of a life-changing experience it would be, but I was up on stage and I opened the show. The record was a hit, but not No. 1 yet. And on the 50-yard line, I see these 500-plus heroes. And they are clapping along, but weakly, because it wasn't too long after the Hanoi Hilton. There was one guy who

wasn't moving. So I walked up after the show and said "Sir, my name is Tony Orlando. Did I do anything to offend you? Because I noticed all your buddies were clapping along, and you were just"

And he said, "Oh, Tony, I'm so sorry. My shoulders have been dislocated so many times that I can't clap my hands. But what you didn't see, Tony, was that I was tapping my toes inside my shoes."

Q: How was your trip to Iraq last year when you went over there to entertain our troops?

A: I spent nine days there with Armed Forces Entertainment. They took us to Camp Victory and we stayed at one of Saddam's palaces. And I spoke with this young lady who was a sergeant, with a 2-year-old daughter back home with her husband. I said, "Your husband is back home and you're here carrying an M16? You just created the title for a country song: 'She Has the Face of an Angel and Carries an M16.'"

After our shows, we had two- to three-hour lines of soldiers wanting autographs. A lot of them said they didn't know who I was, but it was one of the greatest shows they ever saw. And that was the greatest gift I ever received back from an audience: these young troops

serving our country, who really didn't know the performer by name, but knew "Yellow Ribbon," knew what it meant, and then we delivered this show that they loved. Of all the things I've ever done in 50 years of show business, that's the one thing I'll carry with me to my grave.

Q: Is there a particular story you'd like to share about the wounded troops you visited overseas?

A: Going home, we went back to Germany at Rhein-Main Air Base to visit wounded troops. And I'm told that there's a young man on the second floor who just got there yesterday.

When I get up there, his mother and father are standing outside his room. And I go into the room, and there are tubes coming out of this young man. His father said his son was in Balad and an IED went off, and he lost his arms and legs. So I look over at his mother and I said, "Mom, he has survived. He's gonna make this, he's gonna be OK."

She said, "I was prepared for my son to die, but I wasn't prepared for this." And I was hit by a truth that hadn't even occurred to me: there was one thing worse than death for her, and that was what happened to her son.

It's a funny thing how God works, but about five weeks before I went to Baghdad, I went to an event in Los Angeles honoring our veterans and fallen soldiers. And there was a man there, Dean Kamen, who had invented the Segway personal transporter. And he talked to the audience about how the Pentagon asked him to make a prosthesis that was touch-sensitive.

So he meets with a group of amputees from this war, and he decides he's got to make this arm that will pick up a grape without squishing it, and a razor without dropping it. Then he invents a pair of legs that are computerized, that the central nervous system sends a message to, and they walk.

So I told that mom about these inventions. "What if I told you that your son, on a Christmas morning, could walk across the living room, bend over, pick up your gift from under the tree, walk over to you, untie the ribbon, pull the box apart, and take the gift out and say, 'Merry Christmas, Mom!'"

The parents got in touch with Dean, and he went to Walter Reed to meet Brendan. And I think he's a candidate for those arms and legs.

Q: How did "Yellow Ribbon" become so popular as an anthem of such enduring hope?

A: That song was never intended to be written for war or for a captured prisoner. It really was a love story written by Irwin Levine and L. Russell Brown. Irwin wrote the lyrics and Brown wrote the melody. They wrote several Tony Orlando & Dawn hits. It was a love song and a song of forgiveness.

Then we get to the Iranian hostage crisis, 444 days of Americans being held captive in Iran. Penny Langdon, the wife of Bruce Langdon – at that time the ambassador in Iran – tied a yellow ribbon around her tree, and told the press she wasn't taking it off until her husband came home. So every single night, for 444 days, America saw the news with Walter Cronkite, and an American flag behind him with a yellow ribbon tied around it.

When they came home to the Reagan White House in 1980, not only was the plane strewn with yellow ribbons, but so was Pennsylvania Avenue and the White House itself. And that was the day that the yellow ribbon really became a symbol for this country of homecoming and reunion, and welcoming and love.

And the symbol has held through, all the way through Desert Storm, through the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. If you go to most military bases, you will see yellow ribbons everywhere. I was just a mailman who delivered the letter. The rest of it is the American people. They made that symbol, and I look upon it with awe.

But the writers that wrote the song, they were the ones walking around in total shock. It's a tremendous feeling of pride to know that you are part of something that became such a significant symbol of love for the brothers and sisters of our nation.

You know what the yellow ribbon does? It makes America my hometown.

Q: Tell us about the salute to veterans you headline in Branson, Mo., each Veterans Day.

A: In 1993, I started a show in Branson called "Yellow Ribbon Salute to Veterans." That was post-Desert Storm, so there was no war at the time. So I wanted to make my shows on Nov. 11 free for all veterans and their families. No questions asked.

Six hundred showed up the first year. After that first show, we had a waiting list of 5,000. Fourteen years later, we had 178,000 veterans in Branson for the weekend of Nov. 11 – the largest gathering of veterans in America. Each year, we give out the Yellow Ribbon Medal of Freedom. The first recipient was Steven Long (POW at the Hanoi Hilton whose cell was next to John McCain's), the second was Bob Hope, and the third was Gerald Ford. We've had 100 Medal of Honor recipients in our audiences.

Most kids grow up thinking of the word "veteran" as an old man with a flag, walking at a Veterans Day parade. But what organizations like The American Legion do is teach our young people what the word "veteran" really means: a person who has not only put his life on the line, but in peacetime is still willing to put his life on the line for this country.

Philip M. Callaghan is media marketing director for The American Legion.

[VERBATIM]

“Winning is the most important thing in my life, after breathing. Breathing first, winning next.”

George Steinbrenner, owner of the New York Yankees, who died at 80 in Tampa, Fla., on July 13

“It’s time to hang up my nightly suspenders.”

Larry King, announcing via Twitter that he will step down from his CNN show after 25 years

“Truly, the best thing your fellow Americans can do is come down here and spend some money.”

First Lady Michelle Obama, during a visit to Panama City Beach, Fla., saying the shoreline is oil-free

“No one is talking about segregating gay servicemembers from straight servicemembers ... in the event that’s a recommendation from the review group, it would not result in any ‘separate but equal’ facilities.”

Pentagon spokesman **Geoff Morrell**, responding to questions concerning a DoD survey that asks how servicemembers would handle sharing housing or bathing facilities with gay colleagues

“Every worker in America has a right to be paid fairly, whether documented or not.”

Hilda Solis, Department of Labor secretary

“They couldn’t have been spies. Look what she did with the hydrangeas.”

Jessie Gugig, 15, on the arrest of neighbor and accomplished gardener Cynthia Murphy, one of 11 people charged with ties to a long-running Russian program to plant secret agents in the United States

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Sources: AP, New York Times, WHG.com, Reuters, CBSNews.com, YouTube

[POLITICS]

Congress, by the numbers

With midterm elections fast approaching, there’s no better time to take a look at Congress’ makeup. A Congressional Research Service report paints the portrait:

Average age of members of both houses of Congress: 58.2 years	
Average length of service: 11 years for representatives, 12.9 years for senators	
Number of women in Congress: 93 (76 in the House, 17 in the Senate)	
16 physicians	2 dentists
3 nurses	2 veterinarians
4 ministers	13 former governors
38 former mayors	268 former state legislators
115 former congressional staffers	12 former White House staffers/ White House Fellows
4 former sheriffs	4 former police officers
2 former state troopers	3 physicists
1 chemist	6 engineers
1 former MLB player	1 former NFL player
1 former pilot of Marine One	1 former astronaut
1 former naval aviator	1 former commander of an aircraft-carrier battle group

All told, 122 members of Congress have served in the military, including in World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as during peacetime. Some have served in the reserves and the National Guard. Several are still serving as reservists. Three representatives and one senator are graduates of the U.S. Military Academy, and two senators and two representatives are graduates of the U.S. Naval Academy.

Congress also represents the full spectrum of academic attainment: 27 representatives and one senator have no degree beyond a high-school diploma, 83 representatives and 17 senators hold master’s degrees, 168 representatives and 57 senators hold law degrees, 24 representatives hold doctorates, and three senators and two representatives were Rhodes Scholars.

Twelve representatives and one senator were born outside the United States. Their places of birth include Cuba, Mexico, Taiwan, India, Japan, Pakistan, Peru, Canada, Vietnam and the Netherlands.

[WAR ON TERROR]

Drone demands

Defense News reports that the military is using so many of its UAVs in the Middle East that "other operating theaters are going without."

Most of the military's 6,500 UAVs are being tasked to the skies over Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Yemen. Forces in Afghanistan, understandably, have the lion's share of the drone fleet.

But while Central Command holds the UAV reins, Pacific Command, Africa Command and Southern Command all need more drones. The plan is to have a fleet of 8,000 UAVs by 2012 – an impressive number, given that the DoD's fleet was just 200 in 2001 – but for now, the other commands will have to wait.



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New York Post 2001 Commander Sean Powers, left, speaks at a Fleet Week reception. To his right are Post Adjutant Joel Vidars and Department of New York Commander William R. Kearsing.

Steve Brooks

'We don't forget'

New York City post changes name to honor those lost on 9/11.

In the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the resulting damage to New York City's Downtown Athletic Club, members of American Legion Post 1870 had to find a new place to gather. But as people moved on from the tragedy, the post resolved that the thousands of Americans who died that day wouldn't be forgotten.

In a fitting tribute, post leaders announced June 1 – while hosting a reception for Fleet Week's commanding officers – that they've changed its name to 9-11 Memorial Post 2001.

"I think as the years go by, people do forget," Post 2001 Adjutant Joel Vidars said. "We don't. A lot of us were involved personally with 9/11. This post will make sure no one forgets what happened, or how we responded."

For over half a century, starting in 1948, Post 1870 enjoyed a close relationship with the Downtown Athletic Club. Home to college football's Heisman Trophy, the club served as the site for post meetings, and many of the post's charter members also belonged to the DAC.

Tragically, the attacks on the World Trade Center damaged the club so badly that it eventually had to file for bankruptcy. Post 1870 became nomadic, meeting everywhere from top-level restaurants to trailers, until members established a relationship with the USS *Intrepid* Association and the *Intrepid* Sea, Air & Space Museum. The post now meets at the aircraft-carrier-turned-museum, docked at Pier 86 in New York City.

Fang Wong, a member of Lt. B.R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291 in nearby Chinatown and a past department commander, attended the reception and renaming ceremony.

"New York County, for a long time, has been trying to put a post together to remember 9/11," he said. "They've been trying for years, but something would happen at the last minute that kept it from happening.

"We felt it was fitting that while we kind of lost a post, one was reborn with a new name. Everyone remembers what happened. But I think this post becoming the memorial post for 9/11 means more than a brand-new post. This is another way of showing the rest of the world that we won't back down from anything."

After post members decided on the name change, "we sent out a letter petitioning the county, then we went from the county to the department, and from the department to (National Headquarters)," Vidars said. "We didn't meet any resistance at any point. There are other 9/11 posts, but I think people liked the fact that this one was in New York."

On 9/11, Post 2001 Commander Sean Powers was working as an NYPD helicopter pilot. He lost two close friends on the force, and assisted in rescues at Ground Zero. "We got kicked real good," Powers said. "This shows ... we're going to kick them back. Like the rising of the phoenix, our post has gone from almost disbanding to being what it is today."

Post 2001 is known for hosting events and fundraisers for veterans and their families, providing comfort items for patients at local VA facilities, and toasting the Navy, Coast Guard and Marine Corps with receptions during Fleet Week.

Department of New York Commander William R. Kearsing attended the ceremony, telling Post 2001's members, "I've been looking forward to this day for a long time."

Also in attendance was U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Michelle Howard, commander of Expeditionary Strike Group 2, who congratulated the post on its name change.

"I was in the Pentagon on 9/11," Howard said. "We in the military have changed significantly since then. It takes a little courage to recognize that you have changed. I suspect the one thing that is unchanged is your commitment to veterans."

– Steve Brooks

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[MEMORIAM]

A Legion 'stalwart'

Friends remember PNC Joe Matthews.



A stalwart is defined as someone physically and morally strong, as well as one who steadfastly supports an organization or cause. That's how two close friends described American Legion Past National Commander Joe Matthews, who passed away July 19 at 97.

Matthews led The American Legion in 1972 and 1973. Fellow PNC Clarence Bacon, who met Matthews in 1954 and spoke at his funeral, said his friend has a prominent place in Legion history.

"I think Joe will go down as one of The American Legion's stalwarts," he said.

"He was a great ambassador and a great

salesman. And he could recite stories of The American Legion and go into the details Mark Twain used to describe his journeys up and down the Mississippi. He had a passion for The American Legion."

PNC Jake Comer said that any time he had a question, "before I became national commander or while I was serving, I knew I could turn to him for advice. He was able to be a friend to anyone. He was a stalwart, and they don't come any better than that."

Matthews joined the Navy in 1932, left in 1936 and rejoined as a Seabee during World War II. He joined the Legion in 1945 and was elected national commander 27 years later. Matthews met six U.S. presidents during his life and had lunch with one, Harry Truman.

As national commander, Matthews was asked by President Richard Nixon to visit Poland and Russia, making him the first head of a veterans service organization to travel behind the Iron Curtain.

"He was a friend, a mentor and gentleman," PNC William Detweiler said. "Much of his advice was in the form of suggestions, so in a sense, you were led to believe that you came up with the solution to a problem when, in fact, Joe had solved the problem."

PNC and Past National Adjutant Robert W. Spanogle – who served as assistant membership director during Matthews' year as national commander – agreed. "There was no generation gap with Joe," Spanogle said. "He knew many of the Legion's founders; they were his friends. Joe would tell us of their struggles to establish the Veterans Administration and to have Congress enact the 1944 GI Bill. He always had a warm, sometimes funny personal story about each of them."

PNC John H. Geiger said Matthews excelled at helping Vietnam War veterans transition into the Legion. "It was difficult for those guys, but Joe was there to make them feel welcome and feel like they belonged," he said.

Matthews had that attitude toward everyone he knew. "I knew Joe as a father, a grandfather and a great-grandfather," Bacon said. "He was a man dedicated to his family. He loved The American Legion, and he loved all the people in The American Legion."

Read *The American Legion Magazine's* interview with Matthews:

www.legion.org/membership/956/world-according-joe-matthews

See a video interview with Matthews: www.legion.org/legiontv

[NATIONAL SECURITY]

Posts nationwide asked to emphasize preparedness

September is National Emergency Preparedness Month, and the Legion's Public Relations Division is offering "Disaster Preparedness and Response for American Legion Posts," a guide for posts to participate fully in local disaster-preparedness activities, and to start a post-preparedness program.

A post's three primary goals should be:

- Training as many post members as possible in basic disaster preparedness and response (first aid, CPR, etc.).
- Developing a community-outreach program on disaster preparedness.
- Informing local authorities about the post's disaster-response plan.

"Disaster Preparedness and Response for American Legion Posts" is available free as a printable PDF online (www.legion.org/publications, under National Security and Foreign Relations), or as a booklet (e-mail pr@legion.org with requests).

[MEMBERSHIP]

NEW POSTS

Post 2011, Calhan, Colo.:

Chartered July 13 (17 members)

Desert Warriors Post 393, Jacksonville, Fla.:

Chartered July 13 (15 members)

Veterans of America Post 394, Palm Bay, Fla.:

Chartered July 13 (15 members)

Tall City Post 119, Midland, Texas:

Chartered July 13 (15 members)

State Police Post 1922, Springfield, Ill.:

Chartered June 29 (16 members)

Post 137, Tonopah, Ariz.:

Chartered June 28 (24 members)

Deniose Meeks Sr. Post 538, Bessemer City, N.C.:

Chartered June 18 (15 members)

Marshall Scott Jamar Post 61, Abilene, Texas:

Chartered April 7 (17 members)

Post 280, Caryville, Tenn.:

Chartered March 30 (17 members)

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[STATEMENT]

"It is now time for the nation to recognize the unrealistic expectations of personal sacrifice to gain this benefit."

National Commander Clarence Hill, in a letter to Senate members asking their support for legislation that would make all Gold Star parents eligible for care at state veterans homes. Currently, they are only eligible to reside at such homes if all their children died in service to the United States. Sponsored by Sen. John Ensign, R-Nev., the bill was referred to the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee in July.

[ACTIVE DUTY]

PETA honors Marines who rescued cats

Three Marines will receive a Compassionate Action Award from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) for their care of a group of cats found while serving in Afghanistan.

Lance Cpl. Chris Berry, Cpl. Brian Chambers, and Lance Cpl. Aaron Shaw encountered several homeless cats, and they fed, sheltered and provided medical care for many of them. Berry sent one cat, KeyKey, to live with his parents in Davison, Texas, and arranged to have him neutered. Another cat, Kiki, now lives with Chambers in Pearland, Texas.

The three Marines will each receive a framed certificate and letter of appreciation from PETA for evacuating the cats from a dangerous environment. PETA has also offered to reimburse them for the costs of sterilizing KeyKey and Kiki.

"We salute Chris and his friends, who were deployed in a war zone thousands of miles from home and still made time to save animals who needed their help," PETA President Ingrid E. Newkirk said. "Thanks to these Marines, Kiki and KeyKey can look forward to a life filled with all the love, care and security that they deserve."



Media Bakery

[LEGIONNAIRES IN ACTION]

Oklahoma post wins NEF award

American Legion Post 306 in Fletcher, Okla., is the recipient of this year's National Emergency Fund Post Excellence Award, which will be presented to the Department of Oklahoma on stage during the 92nd National Convention in Milwaukee.

Last February, just a month after Post 306 underwent a revitalization effort, massive ice storms hit Oklahoma, and post members immediately stepped up to provide aid to those affected.

Fletcher's Legion family helped prepare meals from food donated by the local school, and served them to disaster workers. Post members also delivered food to shut-ins and disabled citizens. They kept it up until power was restored in the community six days later. In that time, the post served 2,000 meals.

Post 306 Commander Mark Barker said local Legionnaires didn't think twice about responding to their town's sudden need.

"It's kind of typical of our philosophy of not only helping veterans but being a part of our community," he said. "Everyone in our community was affected by the ice storm. We just did our part."

And though recognition is nice, Barker insists that's not what motivates Post 306.

"It was important to us that we won this award," he says. "But we would have done it anyway. We'd do it again."

Departments are asked to begin considering possible nominees for next year's NEF Post Excellence Award.



U.S. Army photo by 1st Sgt. John T. Kibler

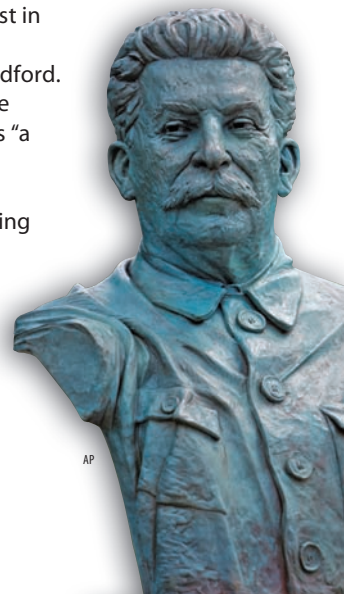
[MEMORIALS]

Busted

A bust of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin has been included at the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, Va. The *Lynchburg News & Advance* reports public protest in response to the addition of Stalin, including opposition from American Legion Post 54 in Bedford. But William McIntosh, outgoing president of the memorial's foundation, has argued that Stalin is "a necessary addition."

That might be true if it were a World War II memorial, but since it's a D-Day memorial, leaving Stalin out would make more sense – he and his armies had nothing to do with D-Day.

If there is a silver lining, the plaque adjacent to Stalin's bust reads: "In memory of the tens of millions who died under Stalin's rule and in tribute to all whose valor, fidelity and sacrifice denied him and his successors victory in the Cold War."



AP

[CAREERS]

How to write your LinkedIn profile

One of today's most important job-search tools is your LinkedIn profile. Prospective employers, recruiters, networking contacts and colleagues will review it to learn about you. Follow these tips to write a profile that generates



interest, action and opportunity:

- **Your LinkedIn profile is not just your résumé.** Include all relevant highlights of your professional career, from on-the-job achievements and projects to community-based leadership roles, honors and awards.
- **Write a headline that communicates who you are.** For example, "Logistics Specialist with 10+ years of experience in Global Logistics, Transportation, Distribution, Warehousing and Materials."
- **The Summary section gives you 2,000 characters to showcase your career.** Use short paragraphs, concise bullet points and ample white space.
- **LinkedIn profiles must be keyword-rich.** Use all 500 characters in the "Specialty" section to list keywords and phrases related to your goals. Separate them with commas.
- **Write job descriptions filled with key responsibilities (paragraphs) and achievements (bullet points).** Summarize older positions in one description box.
- **Always include a photo.** If you're dead-set against this, consider an avatar, which is becoming more accepted (though not preferred).
- **Update your status frequently to remain visible.** Share information about your industry and profession, jobs, networking events and more.
- **Strive for 100-percent profile completeness.**

Wendy Enelow is co-author of "Expert Résumés for Military-to-Civilian Transitions" and "Executive Résumé Toolkit." www.wendyenelow.com

[AMERICANISM]

Thousands receive posts' School Award Medals

Young people are often honored for their scholastic achievements, but The American Legion believes they should also be praised when they demonstrate strong qualities of character and good citizenship. That's why, since 1926, the Legion has recognized such students with its School Award Medal Program.

In 1921, the Department of Pennsylvania created the School Award Medal for the purpose of instilling character and helping perpetuate the ideals of Americanism among youth. The award is given to a boy and a girl in the graduating classes of elementary school, junior and senior high school, and college. Those who receive a medal have demonstrated courage, honor, leadership, patriotism, scholarship and service.

Candidates for the award are voted on by a school's faculty and members of its graduating class using secret ballots. Local American Legion posts make the final selection.

Each awardee receives a medal and a certificate. The six qualities are listed on the face of the medal, and the other side bears the Marine Corps motto, "Semper Fidelis" ("always faithful"). In the program's first year, the Legion gave medals to 145 students. In 2009, more than 30,000 received medals.

Every year, the department with the strongest activity in the School Award Medal Program receives the Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy, named for the Legion's 1930 national commander.

Now that a new school year is in session, posts are encouraged to visit local schools to promote the program and its awards.

Download a brochure on The American Legion's School Award Medal Program:

 legion.org/documents/legion/pdf/schoolaward.pdf



[CONVENTION]

Boy Scouts of America to receive Distinguished Service Medal

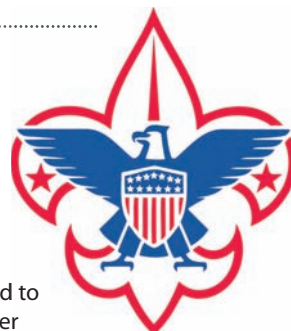
Boy Scouts of America will receive The American Legion's highest honor, the Distinguished Service Medal, at the 92nd National Convention in Milwaukee. National Commander Clarence Hill will present the award to Assistant Chief Scout Executive and Chief Financial Officer James J. Terry.

"Scouting was the first youth program the Legion decided to sponsor," Americanism Chairman Joseph Caouette said. "I cannot think of a more deserving group to receive the Distinguished Service Medal."

At the first national convention in 1919, the Legion officially recognized Scouting, which is celebrating its 100th birthday in 2010. Last year, the National Executive Committee passed Resolution 45, which reaffirms the Legion's support for Boy Scouts of America. Posts across the country sponsor nearly 2,500 Scouting units, helping teach young people citizenship, proper care of the U.S. flag, and duty to God and country.

The Legion's 2010 Eagle Scout of the Year, Joe Phillips of Fond du Lac, Wis., will also be honored in Milwaukee.

 www.legion.org/scouting



The centrality and controversy of Facebook

BY REID GOLDSBOROUGH

By their very nature, Facebook and similar social-networking sites are a way to share private matters with others – news of yourself and your family, opinions, photos, links to other sites, and so on.

But such sites have to tread carefully to avoid stepping on the toes of their more privacy-conscious users.

May 31 was “Quit Facebook Day,” a protest organized by Facebook users angry at what they perceived as the site’s lack of privacy. The protest failed miserably, with less than 0.01 percent of users joining in.

Still, as a result of increasing privacy criticisms, Facebook has implemented simplified privacy controls that make it easier to designate who you want to see what, whether it’s friends, friends of friends or everyone.

Some Facebook users have no problem showing off photos of themselves and their kids to the world. Others want only those they designate to know anything at all about them. This is as it should be. But you can’t please everyone.

By default, unless you change this, Facebook lets anyone see your posts and photos, but lets only your friends see more personal information such as your e-mail address and phone number. Recently, one Rhode Island user went so far as to sue Facebook for this.

Facebook is immensely popular, the second most popular site on the entire Web behind only Google. It has more than 540 million users worldwide.

Like eBay and Microsoft, Facebook is a digital-technology company that many of its users love to hate. And like them, it has brought much of that criticism on itself.

Among other things, Facebook has tried to claim property users’ photos as its own to promote itself, only to reverse this after a storm of discontent. Previously, Facebook started reporting to users’ friends when they went to certain external Web sites that had partnered with Facebook, only to reverse this as well. In 2009, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg made the startlingly inaccurate and self-defeating statement that “the age of privacy is over.”

With Facebook’s huge user base, it’s not likely to go belly-up any time soon. Still, the previously reigning social-networking service, MySpace, was overtaken by Facebook in popularity in 2008. A year later, it laid off nearly a third of its work force.

Some of Facebook’s users are actually hoping the same happens to Facebook. Up-and-coming competitors are out there, including Pip.io and Appleseed. But both are startups and nowhere near as polished as Facebook.

Other established, successful and growing sites are similar to, but not quite the same as, Facebook. Twitter is more for letting those interested know of your daily activities, and LinkedIn is more for business-oriented networking.

Despite the inevitable criticisms, Facebook has established itself as a part of the very fabric of our culture.



One commentator has even christened this “the Age of Facebook.” In an article in TechCrunch, Michael Arrington wrote of Microsoft dominating the technology world in the 1990s, and Google during the past decade. This decade, he said, belongs to Facebook.

Since its launch in 2004, Facebook has been more popular with younger people, with older folks in general less comfortable about opening their lives to others.

But no matter what your age, Facebook has a lot to offer. Along with providing remarkably convenient ways to better keep in touch with family and friends, Facebook helps you easily find important people in your life that you may have lost touch with years ago. They may let you see a lot about them, or next to nothing.

The tools that Facebook provides along these lines can be very clever. If you “friend” someone, and that person’s daily posts coming into your news feed about how they’re about to eat a yummy chocolate bar become overwhelming, you can simply hide that person’s posts from your sight, without that person knowing it. If one of your friends adds a photo to one of his or her albums and “tags” (names) you in it, causing it to show up on your Wall, but you don’t want that photo on your Wall, you can simply remove your tag from the photo in your friend’s album.

The bottom line with Facebook and privacy is that, if you’re especially privacy-conscious, you should either not be part of a social network, or should take the relatively little time required to learn how to customize its privacy settings to your liking.

Reid Goldsborough is a syndicated columnist and author of the book “Straight Talk About the Information Superhighway.”
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How to submit a reunion

The American Legion Magazine publishes reunion notices for veterans. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine**, Attn: Reunions, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206, fax (317) 630-1280, e-mail reunions@legion.org or submit information via our Web site, www.legion.org/veterans/reunions.

Include the branch of service and complete name of the group, no abbreviations, with your request. The listing also should include the reunion dates and city, along with a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Listings are publicized free of charge.

Your notice will appear on our Web site within a week and will remain available online until the final day of your reunion. Upon submission, please allow three months for your reunion to be published in print. Due to the large number of reunions, *The American Legion Magazine*

will publish a group's listing only once a year. Notices must be sent at least six months prior to the reunion to ensure timely publication.

Other notices

"In Search Of" is a means of getting in touch with people from your unit to plan a reunion. We do not publish listings that seek people for interviews, research purposes, military photos or help in filing a VA claim. Listings must include the name of the unit from which you seek people, the time period and the location, as well as a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine**, Attn: "In Search Of," P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206, fax (317) 630-1280 or e-mail reunions@legion.org.

The magazine will not publish names of individuals, only the name of the unit. Listings are published free of charge.

Life Membership notices are published for Legionnaires who have been awarded life mem-

berships by their posts. This does not include a member's own Paid-Up-For-Life membership. Notices must be submitted on official forms, which may be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to **The American Legion Magazine**, Attn: Life Memberships, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

"Comrades in Distress" listings must be approved by the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation division. If you are seeking to verify an injury received during service, contact your Legion department service officer for information on how to publish a notice.

To respond to a "Comrades in Distress" listing, send a letter to **The American Legion Magazine**, Attn: Comrades in Distress, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206. Include the listing's CID number in your response.

"Taps" notices are published only for Legionnaires who served as department commanders or national officers.

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ARMY

3rd Med Dispensary (Karlsruhe, Germany), Mobile, AL, 3/4-5, Paul Strauser, (817) 485-4261, armpit2010@charter.net; **17th Inf Assn**, Columbus, GA, 9/29-10/3, Marc Williams, (913) 306-2803, aguajames@sbcglobal.net; **45th Inf Div 180th Rgt & 1st Bn D Co**, Shawnee, OK, 10/8-10, John Townsend, (405) 878-0707, dtownsend49@aol.com; **70th AAA Gun Bn (1953-1955)**, Myrtle Beach, SC, 10/3-5, Jim Harden, (941) 377-5295, cribbagebd2@webtv.net; **91st AAA AW Bn (M) (Germany, 1950-1954)**, Branson, MO, 10/12-14, Irene Dawson, (309) 928-2953; **164th Inf Assn**, Valley City, ND, 9/17-19, Pat Drong, (701) 646-6561, pjdrong@icct.com; **504th MP Bn Assn**, Downers Grove, IL, 9/16-18, Mike Zenisek, (630) 690-1323, m.zenisek@att.net; **589th Eng Bn**, Waynesville, MO, 10/1-2, Randy Joyner, (407) 808-2981, randy.joyner@sug.com; **761st Med Det (Karlsruhe, Germany)**, Mobile, AL, 3/4-5, Paul Strauser, (817) 485-4261, armpit2010@charter.net; **Army Sec Agency (Clark AB, Philippines)**, Milwaukee, 10/6-10, Bill Spellman, (262) 544-6252, mdbdspell@aol.com; **Nat'l Counter Intel Corp Assn**, Kansas City, MO, 10/7-10, Jerry Malme, (585) 243-0819, malmeju@aol.com

JOINT

Tan Son Nhut, San Antonio, 10/7-10, Rich Carvell, (870) 932-8085, rcarvell@suddenlink.net

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VMTB-131 (First Mar Torpedo Bomb Sqdn, WWII), Dallas, 9/22-25, Jacalyn Hunter Fell, (504) 495-0167

NAVY

87th Const Bn Seabees, Branson, MO, 10/6-9, Patti Smith, (301) 616-4314, patti.smith@live.com

Atlamaha CVE 18, Sturbridge Village, MA, 10/14-17, Dave Hoy, (207) 230-0347; **Bairoko**, Branson, MO, 10/6-10, Janice Poe, (417) 282-6636, jpkay1@pipinternet.net; **Burleson APA 67**, Branson, MO, 9/15-17, Billy Smith, (816) 524-3775; **Callaway APA 35**, Plymouth, MA, 10/4-8, Lynne Crawford, (781) 444-0181, lcc25@rcn.com; **David W. Taylor DD 551**, Middletown, RI, 10/3-7, Richard Roelofs, (661) 284-6757, rvoelofs@earthlink.net; **Farragut Nav Tng Stn and Families (WWII)**, Farragut, ID, 9/11, Elizabeth Spooner, (281) 589-7901; **Frederick Funston APA 89**, Las Vegas, 11/7-10, Walter Schwarting, (262) 367-0055, saltyvio@aol.com; **Hinsdale APA 120**, Branson, MO, 9/13-15, Jose Portillo, (510) 530-1941, portholejoe@me.com; **Latimer APA 152**, Chattanooga, TN, 10/4-7, George Etjer, (423) 644-4321; **McMorris DE 1036**, Washington, 10/14-17, Scott Vliek, (219) 789-4326, divewrecks@hotmail.com; **Melvin DD 680**, Myrtle Beach, SC, 10/17-20, Jim Simpson, (215) 332-9896, melvinreunion@comcast.net; **Mountrail APA 213**, Biloxi, MS, 10/11-14, Don DiCoio, (973) 696-3725, dicoio44@aol.com; **Navasota AO 106**, Laughlin, NV, 3/1-3, James Glaze, (928) 565-3577, jaglaze@frontiernet.net; **NMCCB 14**, Savannah, GA, 11/4-8, George Manning, (850) 352-4020, yeoman61@wfeca.net; **NMCCB 62 & Public Works Dept RAF Edzell, Scotland**, Gulfport, MS, 10/12-15, Norm Hahn, (715) 834-4780, nhahnjr@sbcglobal.net; **Pandemus ARL 18 (All Hands, WWII)**, Charleston, SC, 10/17-20, Joe McIntyre, (843) 747-3494, mcintyre.3@earthlink.net; **Raby DE 698**, Myrtle Beach, SC, 10/5-8, Don Whitney, (252) 946-1970, malligood4@suddenlink.net; **Radford DD/DDE 446**, Branson, MO, 9/29-10/3, Chuck Parsons, (304) 927-0094, kip263@localnet.com; **Raymond DE 341**, St. Louis, 10/21-24, Vern Kimmell, (636) 225-0644, seyer@charter.net; **Savern AO 61**, Scranton, PA, 10/13-16, Robert Burmeister, (718) 980-3380, burm855@verizon.net; **Shelton DD 790**, Elkridge, MD, 9/16-19, Dick Petrowich, (618) 475-3248, rbpetro@htctech.net; **Sierra AD 18**, Ocean City, NJ, 10/18-20, Malcolm Jones, (956) 343-3644, jnauto@att.net; **Threadfin SS 410**, Nashville, TN, 10/14-17, Dick Hartfield, shakyjake38256@yahoo.com; **VP-45 (Patrol Sqdn Four Five)**, Alexandria, VA, 9/29-10/3, Richard Gray, (207) 667-1370, dickgray@brooksendway.com; **WWII US Scouting Sqdn Assn**, Mesa, AZ, 10/25-28, Doug Anthony, (912) 925-4066, dcanthony66@comcast.net

LIFE MEMBERSHIPS

Post 441, CA: William J. Baldwin

Post 530, MI: Ceo E. Bauer

Post 1, MN: John H. Rannow

IN SEARCH OF

1st Avn Bde 17th Assault Heli 613th Trans Brp (Long Bien, Vietnam), Allan Jones, ajjinpa@hotmail.com

1st Bn 7th Mar H&S Co (Camp Sukiran, Japan, 1960-1961), John Ward, (412) 371-3639, jtwardmarine@yahoo.com

1st Mar Div 1st Eng Bn Motor Transport (1966-1968), Joseph Tomeo, joe@blackbiscuit.com

1st Trans Co 106th Trans Bn (All Eras), Steven Stanley, (802) 989-2736, ssstanley1sttrans@yahoo.com

5th 105 Howitzer Btry Mar Corps Reserve (Treasure Island, CA, 1961-1967), Tom Johanson, (510) 537-2199, tjohanson@gmail.com

14th Armd Cav (Fulda, Germany, 1964-1968), Roy Woods, (207) 493-4215, roywoods@maine.rr.com

31st Cbt Support Hosp (Schloss Kaserne, Butzbach, Germany, 1972-1975), Patrick Tanney, (330) 262-2574

49th Ftr Sqdn Assn, Bob Thomalen, (845) 225-2445, the3garribebs@comcast.net

81st Field Maint Sqdn (RAF Bentwaters, Ipswich, England, 1967-1969), Joe Grisafi, (281) 894-2279, eagle100@att.net

174th MP Co (Elmendorf AFB & Fort Richardson, AK, 1947-1948), Bob Mock, (215) 752-4798, bob0500@live.com

435th TCW Packets (Miami International Airport, 1951), Carl Gulbrandsen, (305) 238-0408, cgulbran@bellsouth.net

627th Hosp Ctr (Camp Zama, Japan, 1969-1971), Dean Corrigan, (330) 763-4482

1404th Flt Line Maint Sqdn (Andrews AFB, MD, 1954-1958), Jo Wheeler, (850) 637-3918, cpasora7e@aol.com

AF Recruiting Class (Lackland AFB, TX, 1974), Charles Meador, (318) 649-5335, cmeador@bayou.com

B Co 322 Sig Bn (1951-1953), Bill Hothan, (718) 347-3811

Basic Tng A-8-2 Harmony Church (Fort Benning, GA, 1968), Wayne Walling, (615) 294-2854, wwalling@bellsouth.net

C Co 18th Eng Cbt Bn (Kaufbeuren & Warzburg, Germany, 1950-1952), Jack Thorpe, (203) 387-3123, jackthorpe@att.net

Cadra 7th Army NCO Academy (Munich, Germany, All Yrs), George Weldon, (256) 343-5602, grafenwoehr59@aol.com

Co 51-893 (San Diego Naval Tng Ctr), Richard Hiser, (805) 646-4636, rhiser33@msn.com

Co 79 (Orlando, FL, Naval Tng Ctr, 1974), Ken Forte, (518) 465-8408, ken542010@hotmail.com

Co 183 (San Diego Naval Tng Ctr, 1958), Robert Taylor, (251) 633-7118, robertt1963@bellsouth.net

Constitution CVA 64 3rd Div (1963-1966), Sherrie Hudson, (985) 878-2243

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COMRADES

H&H Btry 72nd FA Grp (Wertheim, Germany, 1956-1956), Denny Whitmire, (540) 662-9017, dennywhitmire@comcast.net

I Co 3rd Bn 26th Mar (Khe Sanh, Vietnam, 1967-1968), Frank Lockman, (760) 365-4182, franklockman@aol.com

Plt 539 (Parris Island, SC, 1942), Oliver Jones, (516) 741-2599, ojohn1@juno.com

VF-142 (San Diego, 1954-1956), Miramar, CA, Jack Dixon, (217) 562-2366

TAPS

Adolph Bitka, Dept. of New York. Nat'l Trophies Awards and Ceremonials Cmte. Memb. 1995-2010.

Barry E. Dwire Sr., Dept. of Pennsylvania. Nat'l & Homeland Sec. Cncl. Vice Chmn. 2000-2004.

David Griffiths Jr., Dept. of Florida. Nat'l Distinguished Guests Cmte. Vice Chmn. 2006-2007.

Walter "Mickey" Kuzby, Dept. of New Jersey. Dept. Cmdr. 1990-1991 and Nat'l & Homeland Sec. Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1990-2006.

William J. Pomfret, Dept. of Connecticut. Nat'l Legis. Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1975-1982, Nat'l Legis. Cncl. Memb. 1985-1990, Dept. Cmdr. 1991-1992, Nat'l Veterans Preference Cmte. Memb. 1978-1981 and 1993-1994, and Nat'l Veterans Affairs & Rehab. Cmsn. Exec. Sect. Memb. 1981-1996.

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A MAN and his wife walked into a dentist's office. "Doc, I'm in one heck of a hurry," he said. "I have two buddies sitting out in my car waiting for us to go play golf, so forget about the anesthetic. I don't have time for the gums to get numb. We have a 10 a.m. tee time at the best golf course in town, and it's 9:30 already. I just want you to pull the tooth and be done with it."

The dentist thought to himself, "Wow, this guy is brave, asking to have his tooth pulled without anything for the pain." He asked the man, "Which tooth is it, sir?"

The man turned to his wife and said, "Open your mouth, honey, and show him."

A LINGUISTICS PROFESSOR gave a lecture to his English class. "In English," he said, "a double negative forms a positive. In some languages, though, such as Russian, a double negative is still a negative. There is, however, no language in which a double positive can form a negative."

A voice from the back of the room piped up, "Yeah, right."

NEED TO SOUND more intellectual at the next big party? Throw this question at them: *Quantum materiae materietur marmota monax si marmota monax materiam possit materiari?* (Or, in English, how much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?)



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AN OLD MAN said to his buddy, "I hear you're getting married?"

"Yep," his friend replied.

"Do I know her?"

"Nope."

"Is she good-looking?"

"Not really."

"Is she a good cook?"

"Naw, she can't cook too well."

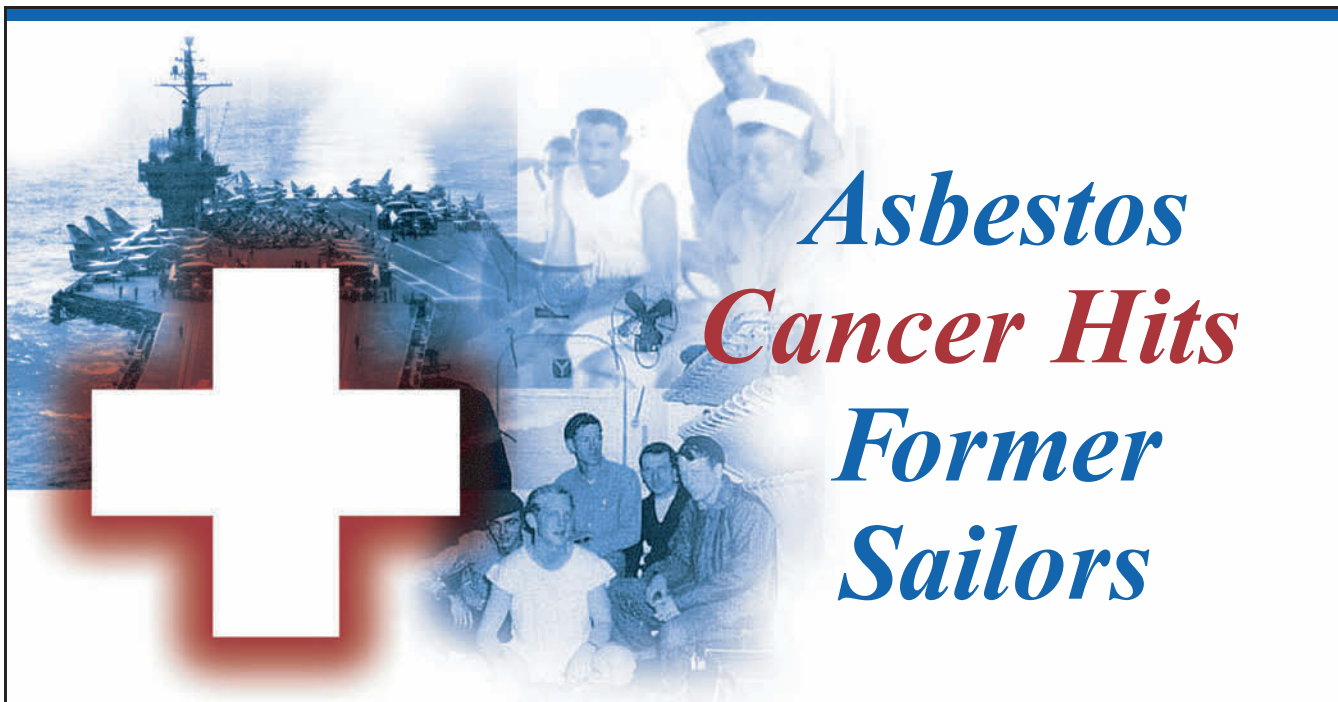
"Does she have lots of money?"

"Nope. Poor as a church mouse."

"Well, why in the world do you want to marry her, then?"

"Because she can still drive."

"THE FAA IS NOW LOOKING into the possibility of pilotless commercial flights. I guess that they figure if they take away the leg room, the pillows, the blankets, the food, they might as well take away the pilots, too." – Jay Leno



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